MORTIMER DELMAR;

AND

HIGHFIELD TOWER.

TALES

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "CONRAD BLESSINGTON."

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.
In every work regard the writer's end,
Since none can compass more than they intend;
And, if the means be just, the conduct true,
Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due.

POPE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MORTIMER DELMAR.

CHAPTER I.

Arnold. ———————— And shall I live on,
A burden to the earth, myself, and shame
Unto what brought me into life?

THE DEFORMED TRANSFORMED.

WITH a smoother, though still undaunted, brow, Mortimer re-entered the parlour, where his weeping sister sat alone. "I must request you will go to his Lordship, dearest Maria," he said, in a low, concentrated voice, "this is no place for you. Without your express desire you should not have accompanied me; you know I was utterly averse to it."

"You were so," said Mrs. Hamilton, scarcely able to command her voice, "but I am satisfied now. Alas! how fully!" Tears prevented

her farther utterance, and, as soon as she was a little composed, Mortimer persuaded her to return to the carriage, "Are not you going with me?" she enquired, eagerly.

"No, I have yet a duty to fulfil. Tell my father if I am not with him by nine o'clock, not to expect me to-night. God bless you and him!" He closed the carriage door hastily, as she was about to interrogate him again; and, deaf to her entreaties for delay, ordered the servant to go to the Inn where they had left Lord Fitz Eustace. As the carriage seceded quickly from his view, he watched it steadily, and a thrill of pain attested a momentary feeling that, perhaps, he had parted from a sister he adored, for the last time; he then turned and contemplated, with a bitterness he had not yet had leisure to indulge, the scene of his former agonizing emotions.

Too much absorbed, in the first moment of his arrival, to be sensible of aught but the exciting cause of his being there, he had not felt the pain of his old wound; but now, as he looked upon the dwelling where he had spent so many happy hours, and where his mental faculties had received their first great shock; and where, it appeared, he was now

destined to act another scene in the drama of life, to the probable destruction of his own happiness, and that of friends he prized, he deeply bewailed his fate. "Ah, why!" thought he, "must I, of all men, be selected to sink Ellen, my loved Ellen, into this abyss of misery! I who would have saved her the most insignificant anxiety. Yet, for Maria, I ought to do anything; she has all a sister's claims upon me, and, to avenge her, my heart must turn to steel—my duty demands this sacrifice, and, since I have embarked in this sad affair, I will not shrink, but boldly go through with it." Five minutes he stood, in silent communion with himself, before he entered the cottage, and when he did so, Mr. Vernon was in the parlour; the tear of grief slowly trickled down his furrowed cheek, as he sat in his old arm-chair, while his clasped hands, and closed eyes, convinced Mortimer that he was dead to outward events, and that his God occupied all his thoughts. Shocked by his patient suffering, perhaps more than if the old man had been vehement in his sorrow, Mortimer stood silently near him, until a heavy groan told him that to interrupt the mental struggle would be to confer a kindness. "Mr. Vernon,"

he consequently said, in a soothing tone, "pardon my intrusion, but allow me to enquire if Ellen ——" He had proceeded thus far, when the loud report of a pistol was heard, a shriek instantly succeeded, and, for the space of two or three seconds, the rector and Delmar looked upon one another without daring to enquire, or communicate, their mutual fears. "Good Heavens! Mr. Vernon," the latter then exclaimed, "what can have happened?"

"I know not," returned he, unable to move, from terror, "and I fear to learn. Alas! alas! that I should have lived to see this day!"

Seeing the rector was incapable of exertion, the young man hastened to the spot whence the sound proceeded, and, with a trembling hand, tried the door of the room where he had left the unhappy Hamilton; it was fastened inside, but a moan from within satisfied him that some dreadful catastrophe had happened. Mortimer reeled against the wall, almost overcome by his torturing feelings, but now, being joined by some of the servants, also attracted by the noise, he quickly recovered himself, as he felt to fail at such a moment would be an unpardonable weakness. By his directions the

door was broken open, and he entered the room, followed by the surgeon, who had been called in to see Ellen, and by Mr. Vernon, who had partially rallied, during the period which the operation of forcing the lock had necessarily occupied. The sight which their first glance disclosed was sufficient to transfix both Delmar and the good clergyman with horror; for Hamilton was extended on the sofa, where he had apparently fallen, weltering in his blood, which still flowed from a wound in his left side.

The weapon, with which the fatal deed had been committed, had dropt upon the floor, while its fellow lay upon the table, together with a sheet of paper, on which he had been writing.

"Mr. Vernon," said Mortimer, as soon as he was aware of the horrible reality, in a tone of remonstrance, "You are not equal to this; can you not trust this gentleman to attend properly here, without subjecting yourself to such a painful scene—you may comfort Ellen, and I will stay here." Mr. Vernon spoke not, but he suffered himself to be conducted by his sympathising adviser to Ellen's chamber door, whence Mortimer returned to where the surgeon was now terdering every assistance to the

unfortunate Charles. Life was discovered not to be extinct, though the wound was of a very serious nature, and, after some time skilfully employed, animation was restored.

"Why," said the wounded man, to his medical attendant, with difficulty, as soon as he could articulate, "why have you been so merciless as to recal me to life? I was in hopes I should have ended my misery, and I feel that your mistaken care is only a prolongation of my torment.—Delmar," he continued "I flattered myself we should never meet again here—you drove me to attempt my life, and I would to heaven I had done it completely, to avoid your triumph!"

"My triumph, Hamilton! I trust I shall never triumph in the distresses of another, whosoever he may be—I pity, at the same time I condemn, you—are you in much pain?"

"Much, much," replied he, at the same time uttering a groan of anguish, then closing his eyes for some time, he continued silent. When he again spoke, it was to call the surgeon to his bedside. "Brownlow," he said, "tell me the truth, is not my case hopeless? you need not fear speaking," he continued, seeing that

functionary hesitated, "your looks say what your tongue refuses to confirm."

"My dear Sir," replied Mr. Brownlow, "I will not disguise my fears for the consequences of this rash act, but——"

"Enough, enough, Brownlow, I anticipate your false hopes, I know I am a dead man—therefore, I have only to request you will inform me how long I shall probably linger—I have no wish for life, or I should not have attempted its destruction—the plain truth, Brownlow?" He fixed his eyes upon the doctor's countenance, with anxiety, who said, "Since such is your wish, Mr. Hargrave, I will own that the removal of the bullet, I foresee, would be extremely hazardous, but four-and-twenty hours will most likely be the term of your existence, if the operation be dispensed with—I do not think recovery possible."

"I thank you for your candour, my good Sir, it is invaluable to me. Delmar," he added, after a moment's pause, "I have known but little of you, though I have heard much to your advantage, I will not, therefore, hesitate to entreat you will not refuse to let me see Mrs. Hamilton—Where is she?"

"With her father."

"What!" returned Charles, in a hollow voice, "are all come to witness my disgrace? but, perhaps, I deserve it—do you think Maria will come to me?"

"I dare not promise, Hamilton, she knows not your situation yet; I will, however, go to her to-night, and if she be able to accompany me, you shall see her early to-morrow."

"I would speak to you," returned the dying man, "but not now—you will come in the morning?"

"Most assuredly."

"Tell Maria I cannot die in peace, until I have obtained her pardon, and that my hours are limited. What is the time now, Brownlow? Oh, heavens! this pain." On being told it was eight o'clock, he said, "Well, well, put the watch there, that I may see it.—Now, Delmar, leave us, but entreat Mr. Vernon to let me see him, if he can make up his mind to look upon me again."

"I will, Hamilton: can I do anything else for you?"

"Only, if I die before the morning," he replied, in a low tone, "do not let your rancour follow me to the grave."

Mortimer, who had advanced a step or two

towards the door, again approached the bed, and said, as a struggle of contending feeling was apparent by the working of his features, "The wrongs of my family are grievous, Hamilton, but he must indeed be bold, to permit his indignation to invade the oblivion of the tomb; my duty shall be followed, if possible, yet, remember, I am mortal."

The cheek of the invalid flushed, but he made no reply, and Mortimer withdrew to seek the old clergyman, whom he summoned from Ellen's room.

"Mr. Vernon," he said, "I sent for you, because Mr. Hamilton is anxious to speak to you, and also to apprise you that very little hopes are entertained of his recovery; consequently, by his desire, I must request you will permit me to bring Mrs. Hamilton here in the morning. We are not strangers, sir, and I hope you will believe I am unwilling to distress you unnecessarily. Heaven knows, for my friends' sakes, as well as my own, I would I had not been the instrument to work all this misery!"

"I do believe you, Mr. Delmar," returned Mr. Vernon, in a voice half choked by his emotion. "I will not suppose any one would voluntarily produce such misery; yet, I do not

blame your conduct, it is all that is honorable. Come here when you like, but—," and the old man spoke with a spirit his companion had not given him credit for, "Lord Fitz Eustace, shall never come under my roof while I live."

Mortimer's heightened colour told the pang this speech conveyed, but he hastened to explain his intention of returning to his family, and concluded by enquiring, most kindly, after the unfortunate Ellen.

"Alas!" said the rector, in answer to this interrogatory, "she is in the most distressing state possible. Fit has succeeded fit, with frightful rapidity and violence, and I fear the blow will destroy her sense, if she regain her health." Mr. Vernon brushed away the drop of agony which gathered in his eye as he spoke, and Mortimer, as he stood gazing upon him, felt that he would have given worlds for the relief bestowed by that single tear. "I will see her to-morrow," said he, "but now I want consolation myself, and could not afford her any. Tell her, however, from me, I love and will protect her." He wrung the hand Mr. Vernon gave him, in token of his confidence, and, with a heart too full for further utterance, he left the cottage, and hastily pursued his

road to F——, where his friends waited his arrival. Vain would it be to attempt to unravel the state of his mind, as he passed onward. Anger, indignation, sorrow, pity, affection, and contempt, by turns gained possession of his feelings, and almost drove him to distraction; but, as he neared the end of his walk, he recognised the imperative necessity for calming himself, before he joined his sister; and, after a few turns before the house which contained her, he summoned resolution to enter.

CHAPTER II.

> "Would," thought he, "as the picture grows,
> I on its stalk had left the rose!
> O why should man's success remove
> The very charms that wake his love!"

As soon as Mr. Vernon was alone, he recalled Hamilton's message to his mind, but he could not immediately answer it. Stunned as the old man was, by this dreadful and unexpected calamity,—borne down by age and previous suffering—almost distracted by his beloved Ellen's alarming state; it will easily be imagined that it was not without the greatest pain that he contemplated entering Charles's room. Anger and indignation had taken possession of his mind, and he feared he should not be able to exercise his usual self-command in meeting the seducer of his adopted child;

yet, when he recalled Mortimer's intimation of Hamilton's danger, his natural benevolence was awakened, and he determined to overcome his reluctance to answer the unhappy man's appeal. With a heavy heart, therefore, he turned to enter the room, where he sat down by the bed, without saying a word, and, for a few minutes, no one spoke. The rector was totally absorbed by his melancholy ideas, while the invalid felt unwilling to commence a conversation which he knew must be painful to both, and so peculiarly humiliating to himself.

At length, after looking attentively and sorrowfully at his aged companion, for a moment, he said, in a faltering voice, "This is kind, most kind of you, Mr. Vernon, to come to me,—yet, I scarce dare hope you can so far forget my crimes as to bear with me a little longer.—I am dying, sir,—Delmar has, probably, told you the cause, and I would unburthen my conscience to you. I am aware how little I deserve your clemency, but I now fear to meet my end by slow degrees, as much as I before courted it. Is there mercy in heaven, for crimes like mine?"

The person he addressed looked up in

surprise, the question was so startling, so abrupt, that he did not instantly reply; and Hamilton pursued, "Can you not give me hope? Must I perish for ever?"

"Heaven forbid you should think so, Charles!" exclaimed the good man, as his countenance brightened. "My heavenly master never turns a deaf ear to the voice of repentance, and, most assuredly, you will be heard."

"You must pray for me, Mr. Vernon—I dare not—cannot."

"Say not so," replied the other, "You know not the mercy, the goodness, of the Almighty!"

"You know not my wickedness, Mr. Vernon, hear me, before you decide. Yet, tell me first if the hapless being, who has furnished me with all the happiness I have ever enjoyed, be able to bless my eyes. Let me see my Ellen, once more—only once."

"Never," said the clergyman, in a voice, trembling partly with anger, and partly with newly aroused emotion, at the name of the unfortunate girl. "Never! dare you hope that such conduct as yours merits it? No! merciless man, you cannot! besides, your victim has been thrown almost into phrenzy

by your cruel words—she now lies in the greatest danger; each moment may prove her last, and, I shall, perhaps, be again left without one tie in the world. Oh! Mr. Hamilton, little did I think at the moment I received the suffering traveller into my humble dwelling, that I admitted a wolf in sheep's clothing. You were ill—you were in want of assistance, and I treated you as a friend, as a son—you sought and obtained the affection of my beloved Ellen; but, when I yielded to your solicitations for her hand, I never dreamed I was receiving a viper into my bosom, which was eventually to ruin my peace. Alas! that I should witness the destruction of my only comfort in this world of trial, by means of one, in whom I too fondly—too blindly confided." His voice failed, and the old man's agony was perceptible, by the convulsion of his whole frame.

"Your reproaches are but too just," said Charles, "I know I am a villain of the deepest die; but if any excuse can palliate my conduct, it is in my having been forced to marry a woman I never loved. I entreat you, Mr. Vernon, to hear me—condemn me you must, but hear and pity the wretch who has ruined

himself, and all around him, by listening only to his own gratification."

"Why should I listen to your villany, Mr. Hamilton? it cannot restore the fair fame, the health, or happiness, you have destroyed; it cannot make reparation for what you have done. My poor girl will die, and your explanation will only render me more miserable, that, by my accordance, Ellen should have been thus doomed to suffer."

"Spare me, Mr. Vernon," replied Hamilton, in a voice of agony, "I know I ought not to expect mercy, but if you speak of her, of her sufferings, you place me on the rack. Alas! alas! to think that she, whom I so fervently love...."

"Love!" repeated the old man, interrupting him, "love! name it not—you never loved her—you only made her gentle nature, her beauty, serve your vile pleasures. Oh! no, you never loved her!"

"I own my crimes, Mr. Vernon, I own that selfishness has ruled my actions through life—that I thought solely of myself in my visits here, but still I have deeply, fondly loved, nay, almost worshipped Ellen. May I find that mercy from above which you refuse me

now! My injured wife will be here in a few hours, and to her I will confide the statement I would gladly have made to a minister of the gospel, from whom I might have derived some consolation in my last moments. Farewell, sir! I feel you are too much injured by me to be expected to relent. Still may Heaven bless you, and my unfortunate Ellen!"

He stopped, and Mr. Vernon took his hand, saying, with a countenance whereon anger contended with his better feelings, the latter of which obtained the mastery as he spoke, "Acutely as I must deplore your conduct, Mr. Hamilton, far be it from me to refuse what I can do for you at so awful a period; if therefore, you wish to receive the comforts of religion, I will afford you in all my power."

Hamilton returned the rector's pressure of the hand, "I thank you, Mr. Vernon, you will, then, hear my tale."

Mr. Vernon motioned him to proceed, which, after a short pause, he did, in the following words, "I need scarcely tell you that, since our acquaintance, my life has been a constant course of deception and misery. Falsehood, the most dreadful and extensive, was neces-

sary to conceal my crime, and, surely, if ever a hell could be created in mortal breast, it has been so in mine. I have always represented myself to you as an orphan, but I unhappily have two indulgent parents to mourn my disgrace and death. It would not, however, have suited my purpose to have had the connection discovered, for, three years ago, I was persuaded, by my father, to marry that lady you saw here to-day, a person of large property, and Lord Fitz Eustace's only daughter."

The rector groaned deeply, and Charles hastily said, "Pardon me, Mr. Vernon, I would say I thought so, then; to my cost I now know the contrary. I never loved her, but was dazzled by her eclat and fortune, and, in a fatal moment, I consented to sell myself for gold. It matters little to you how we lived in the world of pleasure; but, as months rolled away, every spark of affection for my gay wife vanished. I was disappointed, and repented the step which I had taken, and, consequently, sought dissipation to drown thought. In this frame of mind the accident occurred which procured my introduction to you. I saw Ellen, I saw her beauty; I admired her; who, indeed.

could fail to do so! Yes; I admired her: was enamoured at first sight, and basely thought that if I could not be master of such uncommon charms, I would, at least, render them subservient to my pleasures. The name by which you always addressed me favoured my design, for I foresaw that it would effectually prevent me from detection. Under the cognomen of Hargrave, I fancied I might securely play my diabolical game, and the ruin of a pretty rustic was only a trifle in my eyes."

"Stay, Mr. Hamilton; I command you, stay," interposed his auditor indignantly, "I dare not lend my ear to such a shameless account. I will not stay to listen to such designs against my child." He rose as he spoke, but Hamilton continued: "By all you hold most sacred, sir, I request you will hear the confession of a dying sinner. A few minutes more, and I will trouble you no farther." Such an appeal was not likely to be made in vain, the rector again seated himself, and Hamilton resumed: "I delayed my visit to my uncle from day to day, unable to tear myself from Ellen, whose constant attention, added to her beauty, were attractions which I was too weak, too selfish, to over-

come. I soon found, however, that to one so innocent, so chaste, as Ellen Vernon, I could never expose my intention without losing her and your esteem for ever; and yet, I could not make up my mind to destroy my happiness by giving up all thoughts of making her mine. Yet, at that period, I still struggled with my passions, I resolved to proceed on my journey, which you know, sir, I did; but I had not left you many hours before I repented it, for the demon of love assailed me, and I became almost wild. I, who had never felt an affection for my wife, good and kind as she has been to me, was entirely overcome by an uncontroulable, an unlicensed, attachment to the village beauty. More than once I was tempted to retrace my steps before I reached my uncle's; but in this single instance I restrained myself, and continued during my absence in a state of torment:—at its expiration, I voluntarily hastened to cast myself into the toils from which I might then have escaped, had I been so inclined; but I was completely blinded to every thing but that of my own selfish feelings. I will not shock you by detailing my sensations, when I discovered, by my reception, that my

beautiful Ellen was not indifferent to me;—suffice it to say that I passed the first few days after my return in a kind of trance, from which I was not aroused until I had pledged a faith, no longer at my disposal, to the lovely Ellen. She referred me to you; and I then saw that a trifle must not daunt me, if I would succeed in my object. I fabricated a tale to serve my purpose, and succeeded in deceiving you, by bringing forward a person to back my false assertions."

"And who then," demanded the rector, in a tone of horror, "was that miserable man who dared, under the profession of sanctity, conceal such villany?"

"Excuse me," returned Hamilton, "it is immaterial now to expose him; it is sufficient to tell you he was one who owed me much, and that I made use of his gratitude to blind you. I must do him the justice to say that he never knew that I was already married, for we had not met for years, and he only intended to serve me at the time of my father's obduracy. Poor fellow! he died soon after, in happy ignorance of his own or his friend's errors. Through his testimony I gained my object; you agreed to my becoming the husband of

your grand-daughter ; but I have never forgotten my shame, my feelings of conscentious remorse, as you placed the spotless hand of my victim at my disposal. Had you suspected my veracity, you might easily have discovered my confusion; but your extreme generosity prevented it, and I became an accepted lover. Often during the succeeding month, though at times supremely happy, the conviction of my cruelty and wickedness would come across my mind. I loked upon my prize with mixed feelings of pity and self-reproach, which not unfrequently were near betraying me ; Ellen was so contented, herself, that she could not account for my dark frown, though, had she been aware of the fire which raged in my heart, her surprise would have been augmented, in consequence of the few and slight indications of my mental disease. I could not help condemning myself, and brooding over the dangerous game in which I was embarking. Once, indeed, I thought of declaring my falsehood, of revealing my real situation ; but I only saw shame, humiliation, and self-denial in such a measure ; while, by my silence, I should receive a treasure, which I might, by good management, retain for ever undetected. Thus, I decided on

the latter course; and, at the end of a month of unutterable happiness, I married! Fatal act! I have scarcely enjoyed a moment of apparent tranquillity since, in which the dread of discovery has not risen up before me like a fiend. Every smile, every caress, from my poor Ellen, has seemed a reproach to me.

"Your kindness, sir, has cut me to the heart; while the contemplation of my child, which was introduced into a wicked world loaded with its parent's sin, distracted me. I have been tempted to forsake this place for ever, to throw aside my fictitious appellation, and to renounce my only hours of unstable felicity, but I could not, Mr. Vernon; I loved her too well to resign her, at once, to distress the most horrible, and I feared to add another to the sum total of my crimes; and thus have continued here, until the hour of retribution has arrived, and I am taken in my own trap. For my own fate, I care little. I have tasted the honey of my design; therefore, must not object to the correcting bitter. I shall die, and escape ignominy; but Ellen, how will she endure it! Good heavens! what a wretch I am! What can I do? Mr. Vernon, tell me what I can do?"

A sigh so deep escaped from the good man

ere he replied, that Hamilton started, and gazed anxiously at him, fearing his feelings had been too violently strained by the foregoing narration; but the rector succeeded in smothering his emotion, and said, "There is but one thing that you can do now, Mr. Hamilton, to blot out the past."

"And what is that, dear sir?" eagerly interrupted the other, "I feel capable of anything for her benefit, even now. Ten thousand pounds I have already settled upon her and the child—what would you recommend farther?"

"That you should direct your thoughts to heaven, and spend your final hours in penitence and prayer," returned Mr. Vernon, sternly. "Think not Ellen wants your bounty, her wrongs are too serious to admit of remuneration, and I must say, my surprise is excited by your offer. I shall not, and I hope she will not, consent, under any circumstances, to derive support from the author of her fall."

"Nay, Mr. Vernon," returned Charles, "be not so insensible to worldly considerations—my guilt should not influence your actions in regard to her temporal advantage; therefore, let me hope you will reconsider this subject."

All Charles's arguments proved unsuccessful, to make his companion retract his declara-

tion of refusing the settlement for Ellen, and he at length desisted in despair; and, after having dictated a letter to his father, which he entreated Mr. Vernon to put into the hands of Mrs. Hamilton, or Mortimer Delmar, should he not live to see them on the following morning, gave his attention to preparations for his awful change. With characteristic piety, Mr. Vernon administered every available consolation afforded by the christian religion, and had the satisfaction of seeing that his efforts were not thrown away; for by degrees, the unhappy man became composed, and, after some time, he experienced a temporary relief to his sufferings from an opiate. The clergyman then left him, to return to his favorite Ellen, whose faintings, though somewhat less death-like, still continued, and the tear of agony was seen to fall as he hung over the unconscious girl, whose life, "begun in sin," seemed fated to end in shame; for he scarcely expected her to be restored to him. Indeed he was not sure that he wished it, for how could he anticipate any portion of happiness being hers, with "hopes sapped—name blighted," and, without it, where were the value of existence?

CHAPTER III.

The offspring of his wayward youth,
When he betrayed Bianca's truth.
BYRON.

It is now requisite, for the information of our readers, to go back a little in our narrative, and explain the cause of Mortimer's abrupt departure from the Metropolis, and also that of his being so deeply affected by receiving Mr. Hamilton's address at the banker's.

During his absence from England, he had learnt, by means of his friend Sir George Heron's letters from his family, that a person named Hargrave had insinuated himself into the favour of Mr. Vernon; but, as Lady Heron had not visited the north, during the absence of her son, this account was vague, and only mentioned by Sir George by chance. It served, nevertheless, to make an impression on

Delmar's mind, and to raise a fear for Ellen's happiness at the moment, which vanished, by degrees, when he reflected on the tender friend she possessed in Mr. Vernon. He remembered, also, that months might have intervened since this person had been at Claybrook, and the danger, if indeed any existed, unavoidable. A few months would find him again in England, when he determined to go into Westmoreland.

With this determination, he returned home, where, as we have seen, his sister's situation roused his immediate indignation. He had heard, from various quarters on the Continent, no very satisfactory accounts of Charles, and had more than once doubted if such a man, as he was represented, were calculated to make a good husband; but, as no complaints from home reached his ear, his generous nature tempted him to discredit what he heard. On discovering the neglect Maria endured, all these tales rose before him, and a dark and ill-defined suspicion took possession of his mind, terminated, as we have shewn, by prompt measures for elucidation.

His distress and alarm may therefore be conceived, when his search was concluded by discovering Mr. Hamilton was to be written to

under cover, to Mr. Hargrave, Claybrook, Westmoreland!

"Could Hamilton and Hargrave be the same person?" he asked himself. "Could Hargrave have married Ellen? Could—" but he scarcely dare reflect on the long train of crime which his forebodings conjured up; and, half distracted, by anger and apprehension, he had returned to Henley.

After having communicated the result of his journey to his father and sister, with a portion of his fears, he entreated the latter to let him go to her husband, and ascertain the whole truth. Amidst all her distress, Mrs. Hamilton was still herself, and, although greatly indisposed, she resolved not to trust any one to take up her cause alone. She foresaw that, if the supposition of Charles's inconstancy were unhappily confirmed, her hopes of conjugal comfort would be at once destroyed; yet she could never have confidence in his conduct, until the fact of his crime were disproved. Some days were consumed in consideration, when Mortimer declared that the welfare of a dear friend demanded his presence, and that, since Maria would not avail herself of his assistance, he should leave Henley. Thus find-

ing that her delay availed little, Mrs. Hamilton agreed to accompany him, while Lord Fitz Eustace, against his son's wish, determined to go also.

They arrived in due time at F——, whence they failed in learning anything concerning Mr. Hargrave to satisfy them; and the bewildered Mrs. Hamilton insisted on going, in person, immediately to Claybrook, where a few enquiries were enough to satisfy them Mr. Hargrave and Charles were, in reality, the same. The consequences we have already related.

Mrs. Hamilton had passed the interval, before the return of her brother to F——, in the greatest mental distress, scarcely daring to reflect upon his reason for remaining at Claybrook, and alarmed, in the highest degree, for its issue; in which Lord Fitz Eustace participated, for they were equally well acquainted with Mortimer's inflexibility.

His lordship deeply sympathised in the dreadful discovery which their journey had produced, for, though his fears for the affection of Charles and Maria had for some time been awakened, yet he had not allowed his suspicions to range near the truth. Nor had he the least idea Hamilton had proved himself so

utterly base, until the return of his daughter from Claybrook, whither he was prevented accompanying his children by the representations of Mortimer, who dared not introduce one so justly hated to the ill-fated Mr. Vernon. Besides, up to this time, he had carefully avoided informing his father of the existence of Ellen, or of his knowledge of her birth and parentage; correctly judging that such a disclosure could only tend to render him uneasy, by a recurrence to former events, and also by the conviction of being humiliated in the eyes of an only son. In pursuance of this desire, to spare Lord Fitz Eustace and himself mortification, young Delmar had entreated Maria to maintain a rigid silence on their affinity to Ellen, which his astonished and agitated sister had readily promised. "If, my dear Maria," he said, as he was about to conduct her to the carriage, after having detected her husband at the rectory, "if it must be known that this unfortunate girl is his child, I am the one to say so, though, I fervently hope I may be spared the pain of so doing."

This injunction she adhered implicitly to, indeed it was scarcely needed; for, independent of the delicacy of the subject from which

she would naturally shrink, her thoughts were wholly absorbed for the moment by Charles's conduct, and her own situation. She knew it was entirely her own act to attend her brother northward, notwithstanding his remonstrances, and those of her father, to the contrary. She was determined to ascertain herself the truth or falsity of her husband's estrangement; yet, no sooner was she convinced, by occular demonstration, of the fact, than her strength gave way, and she yielded to her unfeigned sorrow with a woman's weakness. She mourned Charles's criminality, and her own desertion, with the greatest poignancy, to which was added anxiety for Mortimer, as the hours advanced, and he came not. Eight, nine, and ten o'clock struck; he had not arrived. She consulted her father's looks, and, reading in them a corresponding uneasiness, was beginning to express her apprehensions of his delay, when his well-known voice from below struck upon her ear, and in a moment after he entered.

"You are later than we expected, Mortimer," said Lord Fitz Eustace, as his son sat down without speaking.

"I was unexpectedly detained, sir," said Mortimer calmly.

"And what have you done at this Claybrook? Is the villain still at liberty?"

"I have not taken any steps to arrest him, my lord; but he will remain at the rectory to-night. I have ventured to say, Maria," he continued to his sister, "that you will see him to-morrow, since he desires to speak with you. Was I wrong in so doing?"

"Certainly not, my dearest brother, if my father and you think it right I should do so. But will Charles come here?" rejoined Mrs. Hamilton, with evident agitation.

"No, I settled that you should go to him."

"Was that kind, Mortimer?" she said reproachfully.

"It cannot be otherwise unfortunately," replied the brother, "or I should not have permitted it."

Maria looked at him earnestly, and then rejoined composedly, "Mortimer, I am sure, by the distress on your countenance, something important has occurred; tell me," she said with more urgency, as she observed a change upon his face, "tell me, if you have raised your hand against my husband."

"As I live, no, Maria!" replied he steadily, "but Hamilton is ill; and I knew you too well to refuse his demand."

She pressed his hand tenderly, as she said, "You did well; but I trust he is not in danger. What is the matter with him? Shall I not go to-night?"

"He will be better after he has unburthened his mind to you, Maria. But do not ask me more to-night; we have both gone through enough business for one day; and, if you please, the carriage shall be at the door at eight o'clock in the morning. He does not expect us now; besides, it is late, and you, my sweet sister, will require rest, to prepare you for the painful interview."

"Alas!" said Maria weeping bitterly, "I know not why, but I fear you are deceiving me, Mortimer. I have always had implicit confidence in your word; but something tells me that you know more than you dare communicate; do you fear me?"

"My dear Maria," said her father, "you distress your brother and yourself, also, by what you are saying. Can you not depend on him?"

"I can most firmly," replied Mrs. Hamilton, smiling faintly, as she looked affectionately in Mortimer's face; "and I will prove it to you."

Delmar endeavoured to return her smile, but could not succeed; he felt that her confidence was almost betrayed, although he had acted for the best; and he was more comfortable when her father persuaded her to retire. Mortimer then quickly informed his lordship of the fact; and they agreed it would be better not to tell Maria the whole, until on her way to Claybrook.

"That will be quite soon enough to inflict another pang on her wounded heart," said his father.

"But did not Charles ask for me?"

Mortimer shook his head.

"Nor any of his family?"

"No, sir."

"Nevertheless, I will go with you."

"There is no occasion for your being disturbed so early, sir; and you will spare yourself a severe trial by remaining here. I hope we shall not be absent long."

"You are too considerate for me, and study my ease unnecessarily. I think Charles would not refuse to receive my visit. Were he not dying, I would go to see him placed in the hands of justice, where he ought to be;—now I intend to hear his infernal avowal."

"Most probably he will not see you, sir;" again pressed Mortimer, not a little alarmed lest he should persist in his determination.—"Under his circumstances, his natural feelings will be to relate anything he may wish to communicate to as few as possible."

"You seem very unwilling I should accompany you, Mortimer; it is strange you should place an obstacle before me at every turn: can you not say at once why I am to do your bidding? Young persons, now a-days, think they know much better than their parents, I believe."

"My lord," replied Mortimer, firmly, but respectfully, "I grieve much that my anxiety for you should have excited your displeasure: but I am under the necessity of repeating that I hope you will not go with us. An obstacle I would gladly avoid specifying must prevent it."

"You are enigmatical to-night; but I am not to be silenced so easily as your sister; so, unless you give me a good reason, I shall not alter my intention."

Mortimer hesitated a moment, and then said, "Attribute not blame to me, my lord, if what you force me to say should be unwelcome to

you for both our sakes, I shrink from it, though I obey a father's commands. Have you no recollection of the name of Vernon?"

Lord Fitz Eustace started violently as he repeated "Vernon! Yes; I do recollect it to my shame; what of it?"

"The rector of Claybrook is so called, my lord; and this day forbad your entrance into his house."

"But the girl, Mortimer?" enquired his father, eagerly, "who is the girl? the child of one Jane Vernon?"

Mortimer signed in the affirmative.

"When and how did you learn this?"

"Before I left the country, sir, from the rector's own lips."

"And why did you not tell me?"

"Need you ask, my dear father?"

"Scarcely, indeed, Mortimer, I know your affection and integrity; yet, I would you had been less solicitous to spare me, for I have long deplored my crime, and sought, by every means in my power, to discover poor Jane's child, that I might, at least, do what I could for her, to repair the wrong I did her mother, whose death I long since ascertained. Who is the person with whom she resides?"

"Her mother's father-in-law, sir."

"Hah! he has, indeed, cause to close his door against me," replied his Lordship, bitterly. "But tell me how you learnt all this?"

In a clear and succinct manner, Delmar related his introduction at the cottage, carefully avoiding what he thought would inflict most pain, as also the detail of his unfortunate passion. As soon as he had concluded, the Baron said, "Good Heaven! Mortimer, is Hamilton aware of the double crime he has committed?"

"He is, sir."

"It is no wonder, then, that he has laid violent hands on himself. A perjured villain! It is hard my dear Maria should thus suffer for a parent's crimes—would I could suffer alone! but, since I cannot remove the cause of all this wretchedness, I must see what can be done to relieve it. You must be my deputy, my dear boy, in this sad affair. My honour and happiness is safer in your hands than my own, I verily believe; therefore, make what offer and terms you please with this unfortunate girl, since I am unable to act for myself."

"Your confidence is most gratifying, dear father, and I assure you it shall not be misplaced, but, I fear no pecuniary considerations will influence Mr. Vernon, to forget, or forgive."

"It must be tried, Mortimer." His son was silent; and Lord Fitz Eustace added, "Our dear Maria will deeply feel this blow."

"I fear so, indeed," said the brother, "but she has more strength of mind at her command than the fragile Ellen—for her I tremble. Heavens! what must be Hamilton's feelings, when he ponders on the wreck, the devastation he has wrought in the hearts of two beings, so good, so pure! Surely the reproaches of his conscience must be punishment enough. I dare not think of his wickedness, it distracts me!"

"If you are thus moved," said his father, gloomily, "what must I endure, who see, in the whole event, the stroke of retribution!"

"Pardon my complaints, my father; I would not wound you," replied Mortimer, as Lord Fitz Eustace gave him his hand, "but I am deeply hurt."

"A night's repose will do us all good," rejoined his Lordship, as he rose from the

seat he had occupied the last few minutes, "and the morning, I fancy, will again call for all your energy."

"It shall not be wanting, sir," replied the young man, with a look of firm determination, and the father and son separated for the night.

Lord Fitz Eustace, left alone, ruminated long on his son's communication, and keenly did he feel the annihilation of his ambitious projects. He had figured to himself the radiant Mrs. Hamilton, transformed into the brilliant Countess, surrounded by rank, wealth, and splendour; he had anticipated the parent's proud satisfaction, he knew that he had sacrificed her happiness for aggrandizement, and now he found that his hopes were all crushed at once; his name insulted and degraded by means of his former folly. A crime, of many years' standing, now brought to light to overwhelm him with shame. In an ill-fated hour he had loved, or fancied he loved, Jane Vernon, and, as already detailed, had overcome her virtue. The first excess of admiration, however, past, he had discarded her, probably for novelty; and, with heartless cruelty, had paid her passage to her native

country, to rid himself of a troublesome burthen. Money he had offered, but, that the fallen creature had refused with indignation; and abject misery and distress, closed by disease and death, were the consequences.

True, it was, the Baron told his son, he had endeavoured, on his return to England, to repair his baseness, but, the lapse of years had destroyed all trace of the mother, or her child, and he speedily relinquished the search, thinking, most likely, both were numbered with the dead. This night had removed the veil! From the lips of his only son, Lord Fitz Eustace had heard that the child of the wretched Mrs. Vernon yet lived—had lived to be his curse! to be the innocent cause of his degradation! He saw himself caught in a net of his own weaving, and bitter indeed were his reflections! "How," he asked himself, "could he again face the world! the cold, calculating world, after this affair was known, and, known it must be, soon, in a society where the misfortunes of others are ever a grateful topic of discussion. Would not the finger of pity and scorn be pointed at one, heretofore sensible only of the eye of admiration, or of envy? Could he endure that?

No! He would leave the country, would quit a society where he was so well known, and endeavour, by the offer of gold—almost any sum within the bounds of moderation, to silence the discovery of his affinity with the unfortunate Ellen." He had observed that Mortimer had not appeared to enter zealously into his views for compensating her for his former conduct, and he resolved to communicate his intentions himself, by letter, to Mr. Vernon, being unwilling to explain his narrow views to Mortimer, whom he knew to be all generosity, and he had that fear of his son which a great mind must ever unconsciously exercise over one of less vigour.

With his mind thus made up, on this point, his Lordship's thoughts again reverted to the painful situation of Mrs. Hamilton. He grieved over her, and his own expectations for ever destroyed, and, with just indignation, he reviewed Hamilton's conduct. Thus, the night was far advanced ere he sought repose, and his last mental exclamation was, "Alas! Jane Vernon, thou art amply avenged!"

CHAPTER IV.

Sar. ——— My gentle, wrong'd Zarina!
I am the very slave of circumstance
And impulse—borne away with every breath!

SARDANAPALUS.

SCANT was the measure of repose enjoyed by the brother and sister; each tormented by thoughts of the past and coming days. Mrs. Hamilton, broken down by illness and anxiety, passed the greater part of the night in tears; while Mortimer, after indulging his various bitter and indignant feelings some hours, sunk into an uneasy slumber, in which the harrassing events, which had so recently taken place, again passed before him, and he awoke with a convulsive start to uneasy reality. Day dawned at last, and he was called from his

restless pillow; firmly he prepared to attend Maria, and to apprise her of her husband's danger. For a few moments he saw his father; and Lord Fitz Eustace then told him his plan of writing to the rector, in which the young man readily acquiesced.

Mrs. Hamilton entered the carriage calm and collected, but with an air indicative of such mental suffering that her affectionate companion almost repented having deferred his alarming intelligence, and half the distance they had to traverse was accomplished before he could summon courage to inform her of the appalling truth. Having, however, broken it to her, a few minutes ere they reached their destination, he was happy to find that she heard it tranquilly, though a death-like paleness covered her face. For an instant, she appeared on the point of fainting; but, by an effort, she recovered herself, and then said, "I am not surprised, Mortimer; your behaviour last night conveyed much more than, perhaps, you intended. I was sure you had something on your mind beside what you chose to communicate; and I need scarcely say I interpreted that silence unfavourably. Do not fear me, my dearest brother. I am prepared

to hear anything now. I trust I can meet Charles as I ought; and that your kind consideration for me will not have caused us to be too late. An idea of having failed in my last sad duty would embitter my life. Are you satisfied we shall yet be in time? I fear your delay was dangerous."

"Nay, Maria, banish that thought. Immediate dissolution was deemed improbable, or I would have counselled your visit last night." She pressed his hand convulsively in her's in silence; and in a short time they were at the cottage. Delmar led the trembling Mrs. Hamilton into the sitting-room, saying "You will stay here, Maria, will you not, until I have been to Hamilton?"

"No, no; I must see him directly. Do not leave me, Mortimer. I cannot stay alone here."

"It is impossible, my poor Maria," replied he tenderly, endeavouring at the same time to free himself from her grasp; "he must be prepared for the interview. Where is Mr. Vernon?" he continued to the servant.

"In Mr. Hamilton's room, sir; but he knows of your arrival, and wishes you to go to him."

"And my husband?" enquired Maria wildly, shuddering as she spoke; "how is he?"

"More easy, ma'am, than in the fore part of the night; since Mr. Brownlow gave him something to sleep him."

"There, Maria, you can make any enquiries while I go to the rector; fear not, I will fetch you soon."

Mrs. Hamilton yielded, and, seating herself passively, said "I am satisfied, Mortimer, he is still alive. I must submit."

Thus freed, Mortimer entered the chamber of death, where he found Hamilton still under the influence of the opiate; but a very short interval had passed before he opened his eyes, and, seeing Delmar, made an effort to address him; but, at first, was unable from the stupefaction of his senses. Mortimer, seeing his attempt, said immediately, "Do not distress yourself, Mr. Hamilton, I will wait as long as you please."

"Maria?" said Charles in a tone of interrogation. "Is here," returned Delmar; "and only waits your summons to attend you."

"Bless her! I have not deserved it;" he said mournfully; and, after a momentary pause, pursued, as he fixed his eyes on Mortimer's eloquent countenance, "Can she forgive me?"

"That question she shall answer for herself, Hamilton. Shall I fetch her?"

"Not yet, not yet. I must have time to think. If I thought she would forgive me, I would not hesitate, but—"

"Fear not, Maria, said the brother; "I will answer for her generosity." He made an advance towards the door, as he spoke, and, meeting with no opposition from the invalid, he soon found himself again with his sister.

Mrs. Hamilton trembled violently as he led her to the room, but she did not speak;—her strong pressure of his arm assured him she was much agitated. On opening the door, she quitted her brother's side, who followed her, and, advancing unsupported to the sick bed, took the passive hand of her husband as it lay on the cover-lid in both of her's, and said in the soft tones of kindness, "Dear Charles, do you feel better?"

Hamilton looked anxiously at Mortimer, who, immediately comprehending his glance of enquiry, replied "She knows all, Hamilton."

He looked his thanks, and, returning Maria's pressure, said "Then I need not deceive you with false hopes, Maria; neither is there any

occasion for me to tell you how I have been reduced to this state. I know that in a few hours I shall be past all pain, and, therefore, I am truly grateful for your prompt arrival. It is kind, very kind, to come to me."

"Could you doubt my doing so, Charles, when I heard of your dreadful situation!"—The tears rolled down her face as she spoke: "How could I fail doing so after what has passed?"

"How could I flatter myself my injured wife would condescend to enter the precincts of my criminality? Even now I dare not look at you. Alas! how you must despise and hate me!" His voice failed, and for an instant he gasped for breath.

"I pity you," said Mrs. Hamilton; "I have come to do all I can for you; so tell me, Charles, why you sent for me."

"To own my wickedness, to sue for pardon, and to bless one whom I curse myself for having so foully treated," returned he with an ineffectual effort at composure, for his voice shook, and his lip quivered, as he said the last words.

Mrs. Hamilton made no reply, for her emotion choked her words; but she pressed the

hand she still held to her lips, and in so doing bedewed it with tears of grief.

"Maria, my wife!" pursued he, "compose yourself; my time is short, and I have caused you too much sorrow, already, not to grieve for this additional pang I have given you. I entreat you to be calm, for I do not merit the tears of virtue. Mr. Vernon, Maria, has been the depository of my repentance and my tale; from him you will learn all that has occurred in this delusive spot; but there are circumstances which have taken place elsewhe.e, regarding yourself alone, still undisclosed, and to acknowledge which I have required to see you. Much as I fear your displeasure may be augmented, I cannot refrain from owning my villany, since your forgiveness will be incomplete without you know the extent of my faults. Delmar, are we alone?"

"Maria and myself are your only companions," replied Mortimer.

"It is well; give me that cordial, before I begin."

Mrs. Hamilton immediately did so, and, after a slight hesitation, from the intensity of his pain, and a deep drawn sigh, he said, "Mortimer Delmar, let me avail myself of

this opportunity of thanking you for procuring me the satisfaction of seeing your sister once more. I scarcely merit such indulgence, though I dared to crave it, and your kindness will not be unrewarded."

"He could not do less than fulfil your wish, Charles," replied Mrs. Hamilton, "in consideration of my comfort, as well as yours, for I should have been deeply hurt that anything in my power had been neglected to make you easy."

Mortimer joined his sister in this declaration; and Charles said, "You are both kind—too kind—much more so than I deserve, or anticipated; which, I think, makes me more reluctant to lay myself open to you, and I feel how much happiness I have wantonly thrown away. I believe the utmost felicity was at my disposal, on my marriage, since I am convinced, from what I know of your excellence, Maria, that you would have been an affectionate wife to me, although, at the period of our union, I do not believe love had any lodgement in our hearts. Nay, do not interrupt me," he continued, seeing her about to speak, "I know what you would say, but it will be in vain to try to persuade me that

aught but policy consummated the alliance. We were never attached to each other in a degree necessary to warrant domestic comfort, and those who impelled the marriage have much to answer for; but, with the errors of others I have little to do, and will not stop to point them out; God knows, I have a sufficiency of individual sin to occupy my thoughts! You are too sensible of the neglect I manifested towards you, in the succeeding months, to require any recapitulation. I feel the blame was all on my side, for I sought to please myself alone, plunging wildly on, in proportion as I began to condemn my conduct.

"In the second year of our marriage, I first saw Ellen Vernon: I was on my way to Lord Glenartney's, when my carriage was overturned, and I procured an asylum here. I cannot enter into particulars of my visit, but its consequences were, that I permitted my passion to triumph over my reason and virtue, by marrying her. Accustomed to see every thing subservient to my will, I could not controul my desires, though I feared I was making a dangerous experiment for the attainment of happiness, which justly, however fatally, has been realized. Every attention,

every look, from you, Maria, since that time, has seemed a reproach to me, and I have many times tormented myself with the idea that your manner expressed distrust, fancying you must have discovered all. These sentiments, however, refer more particularly to a later period, for at first my delusion rendered me dead to every thing but pleasure, which, on my return to you, I pursued with redoubled vigour. I devoted all the time I could spare, consistent with my necessary concealment, to my new duties, and flattered myself I should not be detected. I will distress you no longer unnecessarily by a detail of all my subterfuges.

" Your constant round of amusement, your universal success in pleasing, first made me indulge an idea, at which I now tremble. Hating myself for my crimes, yet unable to extricate myself from my fatal imprudence, I saw you courted by the young—the gay—the fashionable. I saw you treading a path of excitement—I saw too that you had no cause to love me, and I dared to hope — Yes! I dared to hope that you might be so far worked upon by admiration, and my neglect, as to commit some indiscretion, by which I might

divest myself of a tie, which I felt I had disgraced."

Mrs. Hamilton started at this declaration, while Mortimer's cheek glowed with indignation; he forbore, however, to interrupt the tale, and Hamilton continued.

"When first the thought insinuated itself into my mind, I was alarmed, and dismissed it in haste; but it is astonishing with what rapidity the mind becomes accustomed, by contemplation, to circumstances from which we may turn with horror in the first instance. By degrees, I was reconciled to this vile consideration, and looked forward to its consummation with secret pleasure. Your conduct, however, was so consistent that I saw no chance of my wish being fulfilled, and I shunned you more and more as I felt the increase of my own baseness. This was the state of my feeling in the early part of the last season, which, like the two others, since our unhappy union, was dedicated to a whirl of pleasure." He paused, as if unable, or unwilling, to proceed, and, for a minute, a perfect silence reigned in the apartment; a suppressed sob from his wife roused him, and, seeing that Mortimer laid his hand tenderly

upon her arm, as if to lead her from the room, he said, "Maria, do not leave me, in pity stay to pardon me! I will go on as soon as possible. Oh! this pain! Good heavens! what would I not give for ease."

"Do not fear, Hamilton, we will not go away from you," said Delmar, seeing that his sister was too much agitated to reply at the moment. "I am sure Maria is solicitous to do all she deems her duty."

"What a reproach that speech conveys!" rejoined Charles, in a mournful tone: "but I know it is just; principle alone can guide her conduct towards such as I am. Would it were otherwise; but, regret is vain now, therefore I will proceed at once to the point. At the time I was making up my mind to propose for your hand, you may remember that Frederic Sinclair was introduced to you." Mrs. Hamilton's cheek, at the name of the young dragoon, was like crimson, her whole frame trembled, and she gasped for breath, but the chamber was too much darkened for Charles to observe her agitation, and her brother, who watched her attentively, attributed it to some distressing circumstance with which he was unacquainted. Her husband

went on: "Various circumstances made me then think that you favoured him, consequently, I both feared and hated him, as a rival; but, after a time, he left Nottingham. I obtained your hand, and quickly forgot all idea of your preference for him. When we again met last spring, times had altered, I had no longer anything to dislike him for, and, finding him a pleasant fellow, received him at my house, as a friend. Do not tremble so, my poor Maria, I am not going to blame you in touching on this subject, but, to tell you how utterly unworthy I have been of your steady virtue. I threw you together by every means in my power, encouraged his visits at all times and seasons, and, I perceived that both you and Captain Sinclair were again on terms of the closest friendship. I learnt that you were frequently in society together, and, strange to say, that, far from being displeased, I rejoiced at it, for I then dared to foresee the realization of my project, abhorrent to the feelings of husbands in general, I own, but to me a satisfaction in the expectation of finding you as frail as myself."

"You cannot breathe a word against my sister," said Mortimer, in a low tone of

concentrated indignation, "You dare not, villain as you are!"

"No, Delmar, she is unimpeachable—would to heaven I could say the same! I alone am guilty—but let me conclude my humiliating detail. My breath and courage begin to fail me. I took care to treat you with augmented harshness, whenever I had an opportunity of being with you, though, in general, I left you entirely to yourself, hoping to give more facility for your being entrapped in my net. However, as day after day passed and produced no result, and you continued to treat me with your customary deference, I became more anxious, more impatient, for the change I anticipated. I thought my plan tardy, and I worried myself, until I began to fear I should not succeed, which prompted me to watch my victims more narrowly, to ascertain the real fact. I frequently was at parties, unseen by you, when I had not engaged to attend you, at which times your conduct was such as to convince me of the fallacy of my anticipated triumph. Prudence ever guided you, as well as Sinclair, and I quickly saw, that, however much I deserved to be hated and despised, or any other man to be loved or admired, you

were far too upright, too strong-minded, to be betrayed into evil. Sinclair's character, also, was one of such perfect integrity that I felt convinced my wicked projects must fall to the ground. I do not hesitate in declaring that I believe he entertained that tender regard for you, which a good man would feel for a young woman placed in your situation; perhaps even he, unconsciously felt sentiments bordering on love, but it was an affection which was too true to wish for gratification at the risk of the happiness of its object; which opinion was confirmed, by his removal to Ireland, as soon as his duty called him, doubtless with feelings of warmth and friendship, for his pretended friend's wife; but, with a disposition of mind, too noble—too generous—to harbour an idea which might prove dangerous to one like you, —an idea he would scorn to indulge.

"He left you bright and guiltless as he found you—purified and refined by your trial, but me—your guilty, disappointed husband, a prey to every horrible reflection. I was racked with the thought of having committed this enormous crime, in vain, since you had neither succumbed to my demoniacal temptation; while I found myself sunk deeper into the abyss, into which I

had intended to have plunged you. The whole sum of my evil doings, of my dangers, of my misery, seemed to pass in frightful review before my mind's eye, and almost overwhelm me, and I banished thought, as much as possible, during the rest of our stay in town. I endeavoured to make up my mind to see the unhappy girl I had betrayed no more, but to devote my valueless life to you; and by thus adding another crime to the fearful list, to conceal all from the world. From that time, I loathed myself—I hated life, for I have almost feared that hell must be stamped upon my forehead, so fiery has it felt!

I have sometimes thought of terminating an existence so insupportable to me; but I dared not then consummate my eternal perdition by that foul deed, and, for a brief space, I continued apparently more comfortable with you at Henley. Never, notwithstanding, had I been so wretched—I knew I was expected at Claybrook; and, though I succeeded, for a little while, in restraining my inclination to be there, a letter, last September, announcing the birth of a branded child, put all my resolutions to flight. I could not resist the appeal made by the mother of my infant. I left you, Maria, being unequal to the struggle, and I have since

feared to return. Dark remorse, and awful forebodings, have been my portion, until, at last, a heavy retribution has overtaken me, which is on the point of bearing me to an early grave! Hope, for the future, is almost extinguished in my breast, while that of the present is dependant on the forgiveness of those I have wronged.—Maria, will you not enable me to resign my cursed existence with less bitterness?"

The distressed Mrs. Hamilton endeavoured to rise from her chair, and to speak those words of comfort which her duty and kindness of heart prompted; but, though her pale lips moved for a moment, no sound was heard. She looked with a countenance indicative of deep grief for a moment upon her husband, who gazed anxiously in her pallid face, and, in the act of stretching out her hand, she sunk back almost insensible. The delicacy of her health, the alarm she had undergone, united to the tension of her feelings, conspired to overcome her, and, though she contended with the weakness she condemned, she almost found herself overpowered. With a ready hand, Mortimer gave her some cordial, and, in a low tone, entreated her to leave the room, but she

silently expressed her disinclination; and, in a few minutes, hearing Charles earnestly demand "whether she thought his conduct unpardonable," she recovered herself, and took his hand, saying, "Charles, my husband, do not judge so of me. I will—I do forgive you—may God, in his infinite goodness, accept your repentance!"

"Do I hear aright?" rejoined the dying man, as a momentary ray of pleasure gleamed in his eye. "Pronounce those blessed words again. Oh! that I could hear them repeated until I am no more! Speak to me, Maria."

Mrs. Hamilton's tears now flowed fast, and, as she bent over the bed, she imprinted a kiss on his pallid brow, saying, as she did so, "If the repetition of what I have said can afford you any comfort, it shall be done. I will forgive, and endeavour to forget, my wrongs. We are all sinners, Charles,—all we do is evil continually, and how can we hope for mercy in heaven, unless we extend our forgiveness to those who require it here?"

Hamilton's lip quivered for a moment, but he turned to Mortimer, saying, "You, Delmar, have already promised me oblivion of the past, will you confirm it?" Mortimer hesitated,

and he added, "You cannot,—I see you cannot,—leave me, then. I shall not long be a curse to humanity. But, as a dying injunction, let me intreat you, to guard poor Ellen."

"Dearest Mortimer," interposed Maria, "may I not plead for Charles? give him the gratification he sues for—you will not surely be so relentless?"

The dark frown, which had marked the young man's countenance, was slightly removed as she spoke; and he answered, as he looked at her affectionately, "Of what strange materials is not woman's heart composed, thus to turn anger and wounded feeling into tenderness and compassion. I own, my indignation is extreme, nevertheless, Hamilton," he continued, addressing him, at the same time holding out his hand, "nevertheless, I would not deny what you request, for many reasons—here is my hand, if that will satisfy you, and, for Maria' sake, I bid you take the indulgence it pledges—I must not —"

"Do not express more," interrupted Charles, grasping the proferred token of amity; then adding, in an interrogatory tone, "you will not forget Ellen?"

"Forget her!" repeated Delmar, in a tone



of deep feeling, "heaven knows there is but little fear of that. The claims of consanguinity are combined with too many agonising reminiscences for me ever to forget."—Bitterly he spoke, as the vision of his former dream flitted across his mind; but quickly resuming his usual manner, he pursued, "No, Hamilton, fear not for her, since her individual claims alone will secure a brother's care. My dear sister," he said, to Maria, "permit me to advise you to retire, until you have, in some degree, composed your spirits, you can then return here if you wish it."

"No, Mortimer," replied Mrs. Hamilton, decidedly "no; I will not leave him until—" she hesitated, and her pale cheek was for a moment overspread by a more deadly hue, as she looked the words she dreaded to pronounce.

"Until all is over, you would say, Maria," said Charles, who had overheard the half-finished sentence, and completed it. "I know the truth; do not be afraid of speaking. May heaven bless you for your kindness! Oh! had I but known how to estimate you!"—he could say no more: but, covering his eyes with his hand, sobbed audibly for a while, notwith-

standing his wife's kind consolations, and Mortimer's remonstrances.

After having again ineffectually entreated Mr. Vernon to allow him an interview with Ellen, the wretched Hamilton permitted his thoughts again to be led back to preparation for his speedy change; and, during the three succeeding hours, every mitigation to his sufferings was afforded him by the careful hand of Maria. She alone administered the draught which was to lull his pain; she alone wiped away the dews of death which hung upon his brow, and smoothed his thorny pillow; in fact, she did more than many would have done; and, as a virtuous woman, did what she considered her duty. Charles had ever been the cold indifferent husband; he had committed many offences, both openly and secretly, against her; he had insulted, he had degraded, her; and, at first, she had felt inclined to be influenced by anger and wounded pride: but she saw him abased, repentant, suffering, dying—and all the wrong was for the moment forgotten; and, with the tender pity of a woman, for crime and misery, she watched by his bed-side.

The good rector, although almost stupified

by the calamity, still administered every comfort in his power; while Mortimer, unable to have an interview with Ellen from her continued illness, as he had intended, after having relieved Hamilton's mind in the manner we have just shewn, left the room, and, taking up his hat, walked slowly into the garden.

CHAPTER V.

——— Yet I'll look up.
My fault is past: but, oh! what form of prayer
Can serve my turn?

SHAKSPEARE.

DELMAR continued for some time to perambulate the different paths surrounding the rectory, his mind racked by the bitter thoughts created by the late events, of which the avowal of Hamilton's frustrated crime was not a slight cause of reflection. His heart glowed with pride and admiration, as he recalled the unqualified testimony of rectitude given to his beloved sister, by her husband, throughout the period of his ill conduct; and he deeply lamented his father's fatal ambition in espousing her to a man for whom she had little

or no affection. "Alas! my poor sister," he said mentally, "how terrible must have been your struggle! How doubly exemplary your conduct if, as I now suspect, your heart was in the possession of another—one, perhaps, capable of appreciating your worth, though he may be too poor and too proud to offer his hand to the daughter of the wealthy Baron Fitz Eustace." Ellen, too, occupied his thoughts for awhile, and thence they turned to Heron Castle, to sir George; and last, though not least, to the frigid Beatrice. He looked earnestly towards this point of the compass, in which the home of his bosom friend lay, and her for whom he had felt a first, a real, and still tender, affection. Though miles distant, he fancied, as he stood and gazed, that the Castle, with its antique towers, was before him, and that he could see Beatrice; not, indeed, as he had first beheld her,—with a countenance whereon innocence and content were depicted, but pale and sad as she had appeared the last part of his visit, nearly four years before; and something told him that he was the cause of the change, for, during his companionship with her brother, many little circumstances had

warranted the belief that he had misconstrued her former conduct, and induced him to yield to the hope that she loved him; and had he not felt it incumbent upon him to settle this affair with Hamilton, he would, long ere this, have hastened to assure himself of the truth. He was conscious sir George had penetrated the secret of his heart; but, with a delicate forbearance, had never referred, in the remotest degree, to the subject; though when they had parted on their landing, he had intimated his hopes of soon again seeing him at his house. This Mortimer had promised to do, but which subsequent events had prevented, and he neither could nor would see the Herons under present circumstances. He imagined the family were still in London, where his friend had expected to meet his cherished relations; consequently he recalled Heron Castle to his mind, and enjoyed a satisfaction in its vicinity, only from a recollection of her whom he had last seen there. Deeply he sighed as the vision faded away, and he turned to re-commence his locomotion. The sight of the rectory recalled him to the stern reality—the sad situation of its imates, and for another half hour he continued in unmolested solitude.

He was thinking of returning to rejoin Maria in Hamilton's chamber, when he saw Mr. Vernon's old servant, Margaret, with a face expressive of her mental distress, advancing hurriedly up the garden towards the spot where he stood.

"You are wanted within, sir," she said before she reached him. "My master desired me to beg you would come to Mr. Har— Hamilton, I mean, sir."

"Has any change taken place?" enquired Mortimer.

"Yes, sir; Doctor Brownlow fears he will not live long; and the lady, sir, looks very pale and alarmed."

"I will come instantly, Margaret; but tell me first what you think of your mistress. Is she better?"

The old woman shook her head, saying, as the tears started afresh into her eyes—"Ah! Mr. Delmar, it seems to me she will never be better in this world. She has received her death blow, poor dear! this shock, I know, will kill her. Indeed, indeed, sir, it almost breaks my old heart to see her sit motionless with her beautiful eyes fixed on the child."

"Have the fits, then, left her? that is favourable."

"They have, indeed, left her, sir, but she has not spoken since, neither does she seem to understand any thing that is said to her. I wish, sir, you would talk to her; perhaps, as you used to be fond of her, she might pay attention to what you said, and rouse herself."

"Do you really think, Margaret, I could do her any good?"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Delmar, I do; but if you could get her out of this melancholy way, it would give me hope."

"It shall be tried, my good woman, it shall be tried," answered Mortimer, thoughtfully. "As soon as possible, I will come to her. Watch her carefully," he continued, as he paused for an instant, at the house door, "watch her carefully; for, as you say, I love her, and no being on earth grieves more than myself at the desolation I have unhappily been the means of creating here."

"I will, I will, sir, for her own sake, let alone every thing else," replied the faithful creature, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron, as Mortimer turned towards Hamilton's room.

On entering, he found his sister, with a forced composure, supporting Charles's head; Mr. Vernon beside her; while Mr. Brownlow

stood on the other side of the bed, holding in his hand a glass, which he was raising to the parched lips of his patient. Hamilton scarce tasted the beverage, but, turning to Mortimer, said, in a feeble voice, "Delmar, come near." He did so, and he continued in the same tone, which was so low, that it was with difficulty his attentive listener could catch the words, "In my will, I have provided for Ellen and the child—will you see that they enjoy the stipend? Mr. Vernon has refused to let them be benefitted by me, but, if you will, you can make him take it as a gift from yourself. Promise me this, to soothe my last pang."

Mortimer, at the first moment, felt inclined to refuse, for he looked upon this proposition as emanating from an intention of remunerating the unhappy girl for the evil Charles had done her—evil which he felt, in unison with the clergyman, to be irreparable, and his indignant spirit scorned, like him, the price Hamilton would willingly have paid for his selfish gratification. The idea of Ellen's owing independence to the loss of her fair fame could not, for an instant, find an advocate in him; but, on second thoughts, he determined to set the dying man's mind at rest, though he

would not exactly give him the promise he required; he replied, therefore, "Fear not, Hamilton, I will see that nothing is wanting to render her as comfortable as her best friends can expect her to be now——"

A faint colour mounted into Hamilton's face as Mortimer pronounced the last word, perhaps, with rather more bitter emphasis than he intended. His look told that he keenly felt the hint; and, heaving a deep sigh, he closed his eyes, and, for a quarter of an hour, no sound was heard in the room, but the laboured breathing of the penitent. His attendants contemplated the rapid approaches of the arch enemy in mournful silence; the trembling Maria crept closer and closer to her brother, who, placing his arm round her agitated frame, pressed her affectionately to him, just as Charles, who had already, within the last two or three hours, complained of cold, now requested additional covering; this being done, he said, with difficulty, "I am going, Maria; my limbs are dead. Oh! how cold I am—put more upon me—give me something to drink." These demands being complied with in silence, he continued, at intervals, "Do not tell Ellen of my wickedness, Mr. Vernon,—spare her—spare her."

"I will, I will," said he, sorrowfully, "be assured, I will; she shall never hear it from me."

A ray of satisfaction passed over his countenance; and, in a few minutes, he again spoke, "Pray for me, Mr. Vernon, I have been very wicked! Maria! Delmar! pray for me!"

The three individuals, thus addressed, did not require a second entreaty; each knelt by the bed, and the rector, in a voice which now and then shook slightly, from his emotion, offered up a fervent prayer for the repentant sinner. Hamilton's lips moved in supplication, and a smile of hope played round his mouth for an instant, as they rose. "I am much happier now," he said. "May Heaven bless you all! Give me your hand, Maria—I am going—kiss me, my injured wife. Mr. Vernon, —Delmar, forgive. Oh God! forgive me! Ellen—bless—"

His voice sunk, though his lips yet moved, he gasped for breath, fixed his last earthly look upon the grey-haired old man he had so foully deceived, and, after a momentary struggle, the erring spirit of the misguided Charles Hamilton deserted its frail tenement! The

soul mounted to the regions above, and the body, the prison-house of the nobler part of man's existence, lay still in death!

Mrs. Hamilton, having acted almost mechanically as her husband had desired, hung over him in undisguised alarm; she heard his last word—she struggled to repress her feelings, but, as his soul took its aerial flight, she reeled, and would have fallen to the ground had not Mortimer received her in his arms, and borne her from the room.

It would require a far abler pen than that which has attempted to write this tale, to pourtray the state in which the subsequent hours were spent at the rectory. The violent death of any individual must, at all times, be a most painful circumstance; but it is doubly so when the unhappy being is one with whom we have been on terms of intimacy, and when impelled, by crime, to attempt the destruction of a life given for some wise purpose by an all-merciful Creator.

CHAPTER VI.

The happiness of human kind
Consists in rectitude of mind,
A will subdued to reason's sway,
And passions practis'd to obey;
An open and a generous heart,
Refin'd from selfishness and art.

WILKIE.

In the cursory life of Charles Hamilton, we see the evil effects of selfishness, and the danger of the first crime; since it invariably leads to the commission of innumerable others, of by far greater magnitude. The gratification of his vanity, alone, had induced him to yield to his father's wishes, in regard to his marriage; he had never felt any thing more than regard for Maria, but his friends had constantly pointed out her excellence—her rank, her wealth, was desirable. He had found, even before he was aware of it, that he was expected to

make her an offer of his hand; he heard on every side congratulations on his good fortune, and, though little disposed to sacrifice his liberty at the altar of Hymen, was caught, unconsciously, by the dazzle of such an alliance, and when he thought of escape, it was too late.—Every one considered the thing as settled, and he was drawn into the belief that he was a most enviable person. He was gratified at being envied, at being the successful rival of so many suitors for the hand of Maria, and he married, under a mistaken idea that he "loved, and was beloved again." A few months had dispelled that phantom—his error was soon apparent; but he could have been happy enough in the self-indulgence he constantly pursued, had he not seen Ellen Vernon; he might have continued upright, in fact, had he not met with temptation.

Who would not plead tne same excuse, were such admissible? But little would be our merit in doing right, had we no evil to combat, no trials to undergo. Temptation is placed in our path that we may deserve reward or punishment, according to our deeds—that we may rise superior to the struggle, and come forth from the ordeal purified and refined.

Charles Hamilton was tried, and allowed himself to be vanquished, almost without a struggle. He had never denied himself any-thing—he had made all subservient to his will, and, therefore, when he loved—desperately loved, for the first time, he could not restrain his self-indulgence. Had he been virtuously inclined, he would have combated his growing attachment for a beautiful and innocent girl, when he knew, however unfortunately for his happiness, that he was married, and that, both for her and himself, it was dangerous to be together. He knew, from the first instant he saw her, that he could not in honor make her his wife, and, if he could not resist temptation, he should have fled from it. He felt every day more tender regard for his lovely nurse, and he knew that he was tampering with her, yet, selfish, heartless monster, he could deliberately contemplate the destruction of one of nature's fairest works! Shame and fear deterred him from this open villany, however, though nothing else could; and, terrified at his own thoughts, for one short moment, virtue prevailed, and he left her!

But why recapitulate his wavering career? Weakness, self-gratification, folly and cruelty,

marked it throughout, until he married his victim. Let us then ask, was he content? Did he procure the felicity he sought? Did he enjoy that peace of mind which he coveted? No, he was fifty times more wretched than he had ever been before. It is true, he passed some transient hours of exquisite delight, but even these were corroded by the reflection of his guilt. He was obliged to walk hand-in-hand with falsehood, in order to screen his villany, while fear closely trod in his steps, embittering his existence. Mental anxiety, and self-reproach, combined to render him miserable—and dear, indeed, was the price he paid for his conduct.

We little think, in the hour of temptation, of the consequences entailed by a first fault; invariably, a second is necessary to avert a discovery of it; and, like Hamilton, we are led on to our destruction, through the labyrinth of sin. Had he withstood love's earliest attacks, he would have escaped from an act which conducted him, by a tissue of consequent faults and sorrows, to a sudden and dreadful death—death by his own hand! That fearful crime, by which every law, both human and divine, is outraged—at which nature trembles, and for

which, heaven's wrath must surely light upon the head of the wretched being who thus rids himself of an existence he has no right to terminate !

And what does the suicide hope to gain by the act? Exemption from dangers and difficulties he has neither virtue, nor courage to support. But can he suppose that his case is rendered less terrible by self-destruction? By these means he certainly resigns all earthly cares, he deprives himself of every hope of atonement by prayer, supplication, or possible amendment—he rushes unprepared into eternity, and stands before his offended Maker loaded with all his unrepented sins, madly expecting to find, in death, the oblivion his errors forbid in life !

Surely this is far more fearful ; and had the weak, the wicked Hamilton, considered for an instant what he was about to do, he would have recoiled with horror from adding to the black catalogue of his misdeeds !

The unfortunate Charles's letter to his father was immediately despatched, with another from Mortimer, by express, to Merton Hall, briefly detailing the distressing circumstances which had occurred, and requesting Mr. Ha-

milton either to set out without loss of time for the house of mourning, to take the management of the funeral of his son; or, in the event of his being unable or unwilling to comply, to delegate some one to act in his stead. In the mean time, he assured the sorrowing parent that he would take care every necessary duty should be performed. As soon as possible after this was concluded, he removed his widowed sister to her carriage, with the intention of accompanying her back to F——, whence lord Fitz Eustace, he doubted not, would now be anxious to depart; for he felt that it must be both painful and unpleasant to his father to remain in the vicinity of Ellen's abode, since the circumstances, past as well as present, which were connected with her, were most humiliating.

By Mr. Vernon's desire, Delmar undertook every arrangement relating to the deceased; and promised that he would return to the rectory that night, as the old man was unequal at the moment, from infirmity and sorrow, to any exertion; and to have left him and his adopted daughter entirely to the care of servants, however trust-worthy they might be, Mortimer thought would be most unkind.

Mrs. Hamilton also wished him to stay in the house, at least, until the arrival of her father-in-law, and, therefore, willingly consented to his leaving her with lord Fitz Eustace. Accordingly, the brother and sister reached F—— towards seven o'clock in the evening; whence, after some deliberation, it was determined that his lordship, with Mrs. Hamilton, should set off for Merton on the following morning, whence they could proceed to the Continent or Ireland, as might be judged most desirable; for lord Fitz Eustace had resolved to remove, for a time at least, from a country where his pride and ambition had received so severe a shock, and where also he was conscious of having acted an ungenerous part, in respect to the child of the ill-fated Jane Vernon.

A few years' absence would deaden the world's recollection of the affair, should it transpire; and then he might again mingle with the host of acquaintance, the unthinking portion of mankind. He hoped, however, that his letter to Mr. Vernon, in which he had offered to provide most liberally for Ellen, would completely silence the promulgation of her relationship to him; indeed, in his own

mind, he had very little doubt of it, for he was one of those who think that, to the poor, money is an infallible cure for every wound. At first, he strongly opposed his son's intention of remaining in that part of the country; but, finding Mortimer determined, and Maria urgent in this particular, he yielded the point; and Delmar, after a hasty dinner, again retraced his road to Claybrook.

It was late when he arrived, and he only saw the rector for a few moments, who advised him to defer seeing Ellen until the morning, in which he perfectly coincided, as allowing more time to prepare for a meeting which would necessarily be a trying one to both. She had not been informed of Hamilton's death, the rector told him, as he had feared a return of the fits: she had continued entirely tranquil some hours, and he trusted, after another night, she would be better. Mortimer expressed his great solicitude for her welfare, and his determination to act towards her as an affectionate relation. As he spoke, the good clergyman's eyes filled with tears, and he said, as he pressed the young man's hand between both his, "Let me thank you, my dear Mr. Delmar, for myself, at the time that I do the same for my poor

child, who is incapable of acting for herself at this moment. On our former acquaintance, I little knew the kind friend I spurned from me, or the value of your affection for my poor girl. I weakly judged that every one connected with the author of my wrongs must have a heart as callous as his own; but you have proved the contrary, and I thank you for the lesson: may heaven bless you!"

Mortimer would have offered some words of comfort to his companion; but Mr. Vernon turned away suddenly, and desired the servant to bring some refreshment for Mr. Delmar.—This being declined by Mortimer, he conducted him to his room, and retired for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

Fond maid, the sorrow of her soul was such,
Ev'n reason sunk blighted beneath its touch.

MOORE.

OUR hero's mind was far too much excited to allow him to sleep for some hours, indeed he could not even persuade himself, at first, to lie down. Thoughts of his present position came thick and fast; often, as he paced the floor in the course of the next hour, his countenance betrayed the cast of his reflections. The activity of the mind will often deprive the body of that repose so necessary to its health and comfort, and Mortimer, though weary with the constant worry of the day, was unable to compose himself, until he had revolved the path he had to pursue in his mind's eye: when he finally did seek rest, it was of that heavy,

deep character, which betokens severe bodily as well as mental fatigue; so calm, indeed, and devoid of dreams, that, when he awoke, it seemed to him but as an hour since he had closed his eyes, though he felt convinced, by the broad daylight, and the appearance of outward objects, that it could not be early. He was sensible of a feeling of renovated tranquillity; and, springing from the bed, he soon ascertained by his watch that the clock had long passed the hour of eight.

Young Delmar was not one of those who require the obsequious attendance of the highly accomplished valet; he had never been accustomed to the elegant refinements of an exquisite toilet table, nor courted the luxuries of furred slippers, and expensive dressing-gowns, which, by the by, are most esteemed when they are the ugliest things possible. He could, as we have said, dispense with all these, consequently, it was not long before he made his way down to the breakfast-parlour, where he found Mr. Vernon had preceded him.

The latter looked much dejected, and, as Mortimer advanced, to offer his morning's salutation, he placed a letter in his hand, at the same time, saying, "I hope, Mr. Delmar,

for your own sake, you are not privy to the proposal in this paper, which was put into my hand last night—I say I hope not, for, if you are, I must tell you, however reluctantly, that I have been deceived in you, and that we meet no more."

Mortimer instantly recognised his father's hand-writing, and, though he had not seen the contents, he easily guessed the import of the communication. Glancing his eye rapidly over the pages, he saw that Lord Fitz Eustace, after having mentioned his numerous unsuccessful attempts, some years previous, to discover the abode of the unfortunate Jane Vernon's daughter, begged to enclose an order for three hundred pounds, which sum, he engaged to allow annually for her support; adding, however, as a saving clause, that he should not expect to hear any more of Ellen's connection with his family. But, should such a relationship be promulgated, he hinted that the forfeiture of the annuity would be the consequence.

The colour rushed into Mortimer's face, as he read this intimation, and he instantly comprehended the occasion of the old man's irritated appearance. Mr. Vernon watched the

change of his countenance, and his own assumed a brighter expression, when he saw Delmar's altered look. "I see you are surprised," he said, as the young man finished the perusal; "I am glad you are so, for you will then enter into my feelings—your behaviour to me, Mr. Delmar, has not proved that you thought me likely to take gold in exchange for my son's life."

"My conduct, sir," replied Mortimer, "has not belied my sentiments; and, I am sure, you will credit the assertion of my sorrow at this letter, of which, until now, I knew nothing. My attachment to Ellen is the offspring of regard, and I will, as I before told you, act towards her as a brother, but you must excuse my offering any opinion on the subject here treated of—Lord Fitz Eustace, Mr. Vernon, is my father," he added, with marked emphasis.

"True, true," returned the rector, "I understand you, and I appreciate your motive—your answer is such as I anticipated, but you cannot fail to acknowledge that insult has now been added to my misfortunes. The offer of this money, Mr. Delmar, plainly shews that Lord Fitz Eustace owns his daughter, and yet he ventures to threaten the loss of his bounty, if

his relationship be known. The Almighty knows! we have little wish to annoy his Lordship in that way, for his connection has only brought grief with it; but we are not to be bribed to silence—neither shall Ellen be supported by one who, being ashamed of his conduct, would now disclaim its consequences. As your father's representative, you must take charge of this order, since we will not accept it on such terms."

"Permit me to ask, sir, if such be Ellen's own determination?"

"No," returned Mr. Vernon, "she is much too ill, this morning, for me to speak on such a subject—but I am sure she would coincide with me."

"Her voice is, nevertheless, absolutely necessary, sir, before I can consent to act in this business for his Lordship. She is the person most concerned, and I must therefore request she may be consulted."

Mr. Vernon again endeavoured to induce Mortimer to change his decision, but to no purpose; he was resolute in his intention of doing justice to all, but promised that if, when able to attend to the question, Ellen should decide on rejecting the stipend, he would

convey that conclusion to the Baron. The rector, finally won over by his arguments, proceeded to acquaint him with his great alarm on Ellen's account, she having been seized with a great augmentation of fever since the evening before; in consequence of which, he had sent to ask his old friend, Mrs. Greville, to come to her; with which demand the good lady failed not to comply in the course of a few hours.

The unfortunate Ellen being so situated, Mortimer declined seeing her, from the apprehension of increasing her indisposition; and the next day a meeting was rendered useless, by her being under the influence of strong delirium. Her child was obliged to be kept entirely away from her, notwithstanding her frantic expostulations, and Mr. Vernon, being fond of the infant, frequently lavished part of his affection for its unfortunate mother upon it, much to the annoyance of poor Delmar; who, independent of the aversion young men often feel for the tender little beings, whose deeds, in after years, may be so various and so extensive, looked upon the little girl with pain, as the offspring of a man whose crimes and character he justly hated, and despised.

Consequently, its presence vexed him, and he generally avoided the room as much as possible during its temporary visits. Mr. Vernon was not insensible to his feelings, and took care not to intrude too much upon his forbearance; though, as he himself regarded the child only as that of his dear and unfortunate Ellen, he could do no less than cherish it like herself.

Delmar's messenger returned, in as short a time as possible, from Merton Hall, bringing with him, from Mr. Hamilton, together with expressions of the most heart-felt grief, a request that Mortimer would undertake every duty for him at Claybrook, until the removal of his beloved son to Merton, which he desired might be effected as soon as consonant with propriety. Being thus delegated to act in the business, we trust, our readers know enough of our friend Mortimer's character to feel convinced he did his duty in every respect; and it was on the sixth day, from the date of the distressing event, that he prepared to join his father and sister at Mr. Hamilton's, in order to be ready to attend the funeral, which was appointed to take place on the third day after.

Ellen's disorder had hitherto baffled the

utmost skill of her usual medical attendant, as well as that of the physician Mortimer had insisted upon consulting. The latter had not yet seen her, preferring to wait the turn of her disease; but, now that he found it was necessary for him to quit the house, where he had undergone a mitigated anxiety, because he knew he had it constantly in his power to visit her at any moment,—when, we say, he found he must depart, he told Mr. Vernon he must take leave of her, even should she not recognise him. "Heaven only knows," he said, in a sorrowful tone, "when, and where, we may meet again." This desire could not be opposed, and he was immediately ushered to the sick chamber, by Mrs. Greville. Mortimer stole cautiously to the bed-side, and gazed, with a mixture of sorrow and alarm, at the once beautiful Ellen Vernon, as she lay, motionless, with her eyes half closed. "Could that pale, emaciated being," he thought, "be her he had loved—her he had before known—so radiant—so innocently gay—so delightful?" Too painfully he felt it was indeed the same—but alas! how changed! She looked scarcely animate, and Mortimer dropped an unconscious tear,

as he took her passive hand, and, bending down, imprinted a long kiss of grief and affection upon it. "She knows me not," he said, in a low tone, to Mrs. Greville. That lady shook her head; and again all was still as death, for a moment, until Delmar moved to go away. From what cause it was difficult to determine, but something seemed to rouse the invalid, for she moved slightly, and fixed her eyes upon Delmar's receding figure. He stopped, and, seeing that she noted his presence, returned, in the hope of being recognized. Again he pressed her hand, but it was withdrawn.

"Hargrave?" she said, faintly.

"Is better," returned Mortimer, who, though his heart smote him for the falsehood he gave utterance to, and the fallacious hopes he was creating, yet could not resolve to crush all hope in the sufferer's breast; for he dreaded the extinction of that solace might totally destroy all chance of her recovery.

"You did not, then, kill him?" she rejoined, in a tremulous voice.

"Me! no, by Heavens!" returned the astonished Mortimer, quickly.

"Yet—" resumed Ellen, pressing her hand over her eyes, "yet—I heard—I heard a pistol."

"You have been ill, my dear," interposed Mrs. Greville, gently, "and must not talk. Mr. Delmar cannot stay if you do."

"Delmar!" repeated Ellen: "Delmar—I thought it was Charles. Oh! no," she continued, after a pause, "I had forgot—Charles is dead—dead, poor fellow! and Mr. Delmar killed him."

Mortimer started, and turned pale. "I cannot stand this," he said, to the good lady, "she will drive me mad—I must go." She signed for him to do so, but he had only taken two steps, when he heard Ellen say, in piteous accents, "Hargrave, stay with me—do not go."

Mortimer, however, could not remain longer, her idea that he had been the murderer of Hamilton had completely overcome him, and he did not answer, but turned to leave the apartment. As he did so, she again called upon Hargrave, and, finding her appeal unanswered, when Mortimer closed the door, she burst into tears.

"Thank God!" said he, as he listened a

moment to her sobs, "thank God! this grateful display of feeling may be the means of saving her life!"

Half an hour from that time, Delmar was on his way to Merton Hall, with a lightened heart. Earthly hope, which seemed to have entirely forsaken the rector's breast, was still Mortimer's companion; for, although Ellen's life was considered in the most imminent danger, he argued more favourably of her state, since she had found vent for her grief in tears.

Mr. Vernon had exacted a promise of his return to the cottage, as soon as his various duties to his family would allow of his doing so, for the old man had derived both pleasure and comfort from the society of the young man. He felt that each was interested in the same object, that each had received a similar blow; and companionship in sorrow ever forms a stronger bond than the communion of happiness. Partners in the same troubles are bound closer together by the indifference of surrounding objects, or the want of sympathy; those alone who are acquainted with misfortune can appreciate it in others, while all are willing to partake of happiness. Pleasure lures everywhere, and at all times, conse-

quently, it is calculated to produce those feelings of interest which are invariably generated by sorrow.

Mortimer was especially formed to attract the affection of those with whom he was on habits of constant intercourse; his high and generous mind was united to a disposition of benevolence and kindness, which ever won him the esteem of those connected with him; and, though much of the heat and impetuosity peculiar to the sons of Erin was natural to him, it was so tempered by his mother's occidental softness, and his own good sense, that it scarcely appeared a fault in his character.

Notwithstanding the painful discovery, and consequent abrupt separation between him and the rector formerly, he had made so lively an impression on the good clergyman's heart, during their short acquaintance, that he had never ceased to remember him with a mixed sensation of pleasure and pain; and now, although his visit had been followed, or rather attended, by the most dreadful consequences, Mr. Vernon could not fail to admire, nay, almost to love, him. His tender solicitude for him and Ellen had been so great, his sympathy

and consolation so judicious, that the distressed rector felt, in parting with Delmar, that he had sustained a heavy loss. He now had not any one to speak to, for Mrs. Greville rarely quitted the sick chamber; and, having nothing to distract his painful thoughts, he would indulge in sorrowful forebodings, by the hour together.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Tis I that am alone to blame,
I, that am guilty of love's treason;
Since your sweet breast is still the same,
Caprice must be my only reason.

BYRON.

MEANTIME our hero proceeded to Merton, where he had the satisfaction of finding Mrs. Hamilton more tranquil than he could have expected. Of the following week we shall, however, not speak farther than by saying that Maria was a young widow; rendered such by a most appalling circumstance, and that she felt her situation keenly, though she had strength of mind to support the trial. At the end of that time, Lord Fitz Eustace determined to return with her to Ireland, as she expressed a decided aversion to the continent at the present juncture.

Mortimer having heard, from Mr. Vernon, that Ellen was a trifle better, since his departure, was enabled, with less mental uneasiness, to accompany his father and sister to London, whence, in a short time, he saw them set off by sea, for Ireland. He had resisted every persuasion to go with them, but promised to follow within a short period. It will be quickly divined that his intention was to return to the North, and such was really the case; for, though intelligence from that quarter was more favourable, he could perceive that Mr. Vernon was a prey to the greatest despondency, and he suspected more, perhaps, than the truth, but certainly, more than he knew. He accordingly despatched all his sister's urgent business as speedily as possible, and started by coach again for F—.

While in the Metropolis, his thoughts not unfrequently turned to Sir George Heron, and Beatrice; he longed to see them, but he could not conquer his repugnance even to write to his friend, under the then existing circumstances. He foresaw that any visit, or letters, on his part, must entail explanations, or at least, a most painful recurrence to past events, from which, in the yet early stage of his

irritated and wounded mind, he shrunk, with natural timidity. Harrassed by his multifarious employments, he, perhaps, permitted himself to be unduly depressed by his sister's bereavement, and to feel deeply the humiliating notoriety his family would gain in the ever busy world.

Thus, although he passed within a very short distance of the Hall, he avoided pausing there, for the reason we have mentioned, and in due time reached the rectory. How often are those plans, which we have arranged according to our own ideas of comfort, frustrated most unexpectedly, and yet, not unfrequently most fortunately, as it afterwards appears, by events we have little calculated upon!

Our friend Mortimer had purposely kept aloof from the Herons, and yet, it so happened, the very first person he saw in the Parsonage garden, was his friend, Sir George!

"Delmar, my dear fellow," he said, without noticing, and perhaps without observing, Mortimer's surprise, "how glad I am to see you again amongst us; not for myself only, but for the sake of our good friends here, who

have sadly felt your loss. But come, do not look so gloomy, Ellen is better."

"Thank you, George, for that news. You no doubt, know now why I am anxious about her, and will not wonder to see me here, though I confess I was not prepared for the pleasure of meeting you. When did you leave Hertfordshire?"

"We have been a fortnight at the castle," returned the Baronet, "and learning, on our arrival, that Mr. Vernon expected you to return soon, I forbore troubling you with an epistle. I trust you left your family in tolerable health?"

"As well as I could anticipate," said Mortimer, with a sigh; "but I think my father was more affected than would have been supposed:—but tell me, George," he continued, quickly changing the subject, "what has brought you here at this advanced season?"

"Oh! it was an arrangement between my mother and some Scotch cousins; but we will explain that another time, for Ellen and Mr. Vernon are anxious to see you."

By this time they had entered the cottage, and were met by the rector, and led by him into the parlour, where the first object that

met the eye of Mortimer, was Beatrice Heron. She was speaking to Mrs. Greville, and her head, half turned aside, prevented his observing the expression of her countenance at the moment of his entrance. He started, for he did not expect to be ushered into her presence, and a paler shade for an instant overspread his cheek, but he quickly recovered himself, and advanced towards her with unhesitating kindness. His reception was courteous and unembarrassed, and a moment after she turned to Mr. Vernon, saying, as she rose, "I am now going again to Ellen, sir, but will not stay long, though she is certainly better to-day."

"I am glad to hear you say so, my dear Miss Heron, for I myself fancied her stronger." She quitted the room, and Mr. Vernon, turning to Mortimer, continued, "Miss Heron has been so kind as to come here several times to sit an hour with my poor girl, who is much pleased with her kind attention." He then proceeded to answer Mortimer's anxious enquiries, by informing him that he dated the amendment in the invalid from the period of his last interview with her. "Seeing you, my dear Mr. Delmar," he said, "seemed to recal

her scattered senses; for, although she has wept almost continually since, all disease has gradually disappeared, and we hope, in a few days, to see her down stairs. But you must judge for yourself."

"Me!" said Mortimer, "she will not see me!"

"Do you doubt it, Mr. Delmar? It was only a few hours ago that she desired me to let her know the moment you arrived, as she had much to communicate to you."

"Indeed! she must have been undeceived with regard to her opinion of me then--has she spoken at all, sir, of what has occurred?"

"Never," replied the rector, "and we feared to introduce the subject."

"That is well—the wound will sooner heal if unmolested."

Beatrice soon returned, and, on Mortimer's enquiring her opinion of Ellen, she told him that the invalid had commissioned her to request Mr. Delmar would come to her directly. "However," she continued, "I told her you were at present engaged, for I think she is too tired to see you now."

Mortimer thought her voice seemed more soft, when speaking of Ellen, her manner—

more kind, and he felt vexed when, after a quarter of an hour's conversation, she left the cottage with her brother, who exacted a promise from his friend that he would visit the castle in a day or two.

That evening Mr. Vernon succeeded in persuading Ellen to forego the projected meeting with Mortimer, since she was fatigued, and it would necessarily be an agitating one for her; but they found that, in consequence of her unsatisfied anxiety, she slept little, and was not so well in the morning. However, as soon as she was up she sent for him, and Mortimer instantly obeyed the summons, though, it must be confessed, not without a tincture of fear that the interview would be a painful one. On entering the room, he was immediately struck by her emaciated appearance—she was reposing on a couch, beside which stood the bercelette of her little girl, wherein the latter was lying asleep. Thin, pale, and weak, the first glance told her visiter how deep, how sure, grief had made her its prey; but he had sufficient command over his countenance to conceal his sudden alarm, and he took her extended hand with the most affectionate kindness. For some moments she

was greatly agitated, and, motioning him to the chair beside her, continued to press his hand in hers, and sob painfully, notwithstanding his tender remonstrances. At length she partially recovered her composure, though her voice yet trembled, as she said, "Alas! how severely does the sad cause of this meeting, my kind friend, recal the abruptness of our first separation. Our acquaintance is doomed to be marked by sorrow, soothed only by your disinterested kindness. Most deeply do I feel, and most warmly acknowledge, your brotherly conduct."

Again her tears threatened to overcome her calmness, and Mortimer replied, "My painful duty, dear Ellen, has obliged me, in more than one instance, to wound the heart of one whom I would have screened from every ill; and I have acutely felt the unavoidable agony I have inflicted. It therefore gives me the greatest satisfaction to know that my actions have not been misconstrued. Any and every exertion, in my power, for your advantage, is at your command."

"You are little aware, Mr. Delmar, how much—"

"Mr. Delmar, Ellen," he said, reproachfully,

"I have not called you by so cold a name. Am I not your brother?"

"I have no name now," rejoined she, sorrowfully, "but, that I received at the font—there you could not mistake—but look not so sad, my brother Mortimer, I will not offend again, for the sweet privilege of owning my relationship will not be lightly valued. But I was going to say that you are little aware how much I am about to impose upon you. There are many things, Mortimer, which have happened lately, I would have explained—many questions I believe you alone can solve, and I have waited your return, that I might have the mystery unravelled. I feel I am making a great demand upon your kindness, in asking for a repetition of what has probed us all so deeply, but——" and here again her courage failed, and she wept bitterly.

"Why distress, yourself thus, my poor Ellen," said Mortimer, "why harp on this subject, at least until you are stronger; believe me, in many cases, ignorance is bliss. A detail of the past is only calculated to arouse our grief, without any use. Let me entreat you to retract your request."

"I cannot, Mortimer, indeed; I would have

applied to dear Mr. Vernon, but I wished to spare him one pang if possible, for I am sure he has been far from well, since you went away. Will you not in pity to him do as I ask? I look to you as my comfort."

"And such I will endeavour to prove, Ellen, not in the hazardous manner you propose, but by surer means."

"My only wish, Mortimer, is to hear all—I know," she continued, as her manner assumed the wildness, and her eye the brilliancy, of delirium, "I know indeed, too well, that poor Hargrave is dead, though you told me the contrary—I know," and she pointed to the bercelette, "that little innocent, like her wretched mother, is an outcast—I know—"

"Nay, Ellen," said Delmar, rising, not a little alarmed by her gestures, "I must leave you if you talk thus, neither dare I come again unless you are more tranquil; this, however, I will promise you, I will tell you all you desire to know in a few days, when you are better. Do not weep—come, shew me your baby."

"Why should you ask to see it, Mortimer? It can prove but an eye-sore to one of noble birth like you. Alas! poor infant!" she pursued, as she took it in her arms, and covered

it with kisses, "would that it had pleased thy Maker to remove thee at thy birth from a world of sin and misery! See, Mortimer, she smiles, she already knows you are good, and kind to me."

Delmar made no answer, for her words cut him to the heart; but he did not repulse the child, whom its mother placed upon his knee, and, for the first time in his life, he caressed the infant.

"You will have her taken care of, Mortimer, when I am gone," said Ellen, inquiringly, as she stroked its tender cheek, "you will discharge that duty yourself?"

"I hope, dear Ellen," returned her companion, after an instantaneous pause of surprise at this sudden request, "you will be more capable of resuming your duties every day now."

"So they tell me, Mortimer," she replied with a sigh, which told him no such hope existed in her breast. He was not willing to fathom the meaning of this speech, and therefore hailed the entrance of Mrs. Greville, with pleasure, and availed himself of it to terminate his visit. To all Mr. Vernon's interrogations, he replied in such a manner as not to reveal the forcible impression the interview had made

upon him. He could not give any pleasing account; he was unwilling to communicate his fears and forebodings, and wisely resolved to be silent, at least, until he had more opportunity of seeing Ellen.

Men invariably become alarmed in cases of illness, both for themselves and others, much sooner than the softer sex, whose habits naturally lead them more frequently into the atmosphere of a sick room; and Mortimer, unaccustomed to contemplate severe indisposition, was influenced by Ellen's grief and despondency. The fact was, that he had been prepared, or rather had flattered himself, with the hope of finding the invalid better than he really did. Her appearance at first shocked him, and, although she looked better after a little while, he could not divest himself of the idea of her early death, and was consequently sensible of a depression on his spirits.

Sir George Heron rode over in the afternoon to the cottage, and spent an hour with his friend. He was the bearer of an invitation, backed most cordially by his mother, that Mortimer would come up to the castle on the following day; which, at first, he declined, wishing to devote his time to Ellen and Mr.

Vernon. The latter, however, expressed his wish for him not to consider them so entirely, and he agreed to accept a dinner and a bed, accordingly, at the castle.

"I will send a horse for you Delmar, about mid-day," said the baronet, as he shook his hand at parting.

"By no means, my dear George, I thank you," returned he, "I should much prefer trusting to my own limbs for making my way to you. I know the road by the fields well." A slight sigh escaped him, and George, observing it, pressed him no farther on the subject, but took his leave, saying, he should expect him early.

Now it may seem strange that the Honourable Mortimer Delmar, who certainly was, and had long ago been, affected by a strong partiality, as the reader will doubtless remember, for his friend's sister, and had determined that, as soon as possible, he would repair his error, and renew his suit; it may seem strange we say, that he should have appeared backward in availing himself of the earliest opportunity of approaching her. But true love is a most modest passion, and, feeling neither his spirits nor his self-confidence at their best,

Delmar had shrunk from a return to the haunt of his first and purest affection, when the occasion he had looked for presented itself. Persuasion, however, had overcome the sensations, and he then thought with satisfaction of his re-admission to the baronet's family circle. He passed great part of the evening with the invalid, who signified her intention of leaving her room on the following day.

"You have already done me so much good, dear Mortimer," said she, laying her little thin hand upon his, "that I think, if I am always with you, I shall soon be able to bear the painful disclosure."

Upon this, he recommended her to defer this purpose another day or two, particularly as he had engaged himself to Sir George on the morrow, not supposing she would so soon be able to give him the pleasure of seeing her in the parlour. To this she assented, for it appeared as if her affection for Mortimer was compounded of so much deference and esteem, as well as tender love, that a very trifle was sufficient to bias her, and he left her certainly more tranquil than on his arrival.

Towards one o'clock, after having desired

that a boy might be sent with his bag in the course of an hour, he sauntered across the fields, which separated the village from the castle, thinking deeply of numberless things, which we have neither the time nor the inclination to analize. As he reached that spot, where he and his friend had been overtaken by the storm, an unaccountable impulse made him stop; and, turning round for a few minutes, he remained stationary, until the voice of Sir George, in tones of raillery, was heard close to him. He turned quickly, and, taking the baronet's arm, they walked onwards.

George could not forbear noticing his companion's gloom, though he would not openly remark it; but, after having detailed the state of the inmates of the rectory, Mortimer himself entered upon the momentous subject, saying, "You, perhaps, may have felt, Heron, that I have betrayed a want of friendship—of confidence towards you, in all that relates to Ellen; for, now that you know how we stand connected, you doubtless can account for my abrupt departure from England; but I assure you such was not the case, since I have never doubted the strength of your attachment. You must, however, acknowledge that I could not

commit the discovery I had made, even to your keeping, without bringing forward my father's name to your notice, in a manner at once unpleasant and painful; therefore, I restrained my wish for your advice and sympathy. I think Mr. Vernon has told you all that has occurred, and thus spared me the mortification of an explanation?"

"He has, Delmar. You have heard that my father was a very old and dear friend of his; consequently, I believe he has permitted a portion of that esteem he felt for him, to devolve upon his son. He, therefore, as soon as I paid him a visit after arriving here, informed me of the distressing circumstances which had again called you to this part of the country: and I can assure you, my dear fellow, if it were possible to have raised my admiration of your worth in a higher degree, his unequivocal testimony of your noble generosity would have effected it. I can well understand and appreciate your reserve on this head, and I am sure you will credit my sincere sorrow for the distress you must have suffered throughout the affair."

"I do, indeed, George; and I must say I am glad you are no longer to be kept in the dark

on the subject, for I am convinced that mental anxiety is increased two-fold, by being confined within the narrow compass of a man's breast. Sympathy from a friend is like a composing draught; it soothes and comforts the frame, though it may not eradicate the disease."

"Still a moraliser, Mortimer," said his companion, smiling. "Come, let us step on towards the Castle, for our composing draught seems to have acted so potently that we have been almost standing still the last quarter of an hour."

They now proceeded without hesitation, conversing in a more lively vein, and soon found themselves in Heron Park, where every object, almost every tree, seemed familiar to the returned Mortimer; who became more silent as he and his companion neared the mansion.

"My sister is not far off, I presume," said sir George, as Beatrice's favourite greyhound came bounding towards them. "Bedos rarely quits her side."

The little animal, after having leaped fawningly upon its master, ran quickly up to Delmar; and, with inquisitive eagerness, stood

upon his hind legs to smell his hands, and then looked in his face with earnest enquiry. "Poor Bedos!" said our hero, attracted by his actions, and bending, as he spoke, to pat the dog's head, "I really think you have not forgotten me."

"No, that I am sure he has not," rejoined the Baronet, as Bedos testified, by every dumb expression, his delight at hearing his old friend's voice. The dog still occupied their attention, when they reached the lawn, where they were met by lady Heron and her daughter. Mortimer found a kind welcome from each, and, in a short time, was as much at home as if he had been there but yesterday.

Beatrice, ever gentle and kind, seemed even more so to him now that his feelings yet smarted from recent sorrow, and the augmented pensiveness which he detected in her manner, since they parted, contributed, from its congeniality, to tighten the silken cord which already bound him to her. With a mind entirely pre-disposed to be pleased with his fair companion, and feeling he had before mistaken and resisted the promptings of his better genius, it will not be a matter of surprise to any, that Mortimer found the hours fly

rapidly in the society of Beatrice Heron.—More than once he caught himself silently contemplating her with a soothing satisfaction—a tender admiration, as she sat with half averted face, speaking to her mother, or George. Her behaviour to him was easy and unaffected; and he already indulged a hope that she might yet be his. Among the many females he had seen, Beatrice alone had made that lasting impression which neither time nor distance could efface; and, after having travelled for years throughout almost every country of southern Europe, and mixed in the pleasures of the world with the ardent Italian, the soft, the lovely Greek, or the gay and lively French, he returned with pleasure to the companionship, of the unsophisticated child of retirement. For such Beatrice might truly be designated, never having, for more than a few weeks at a time, quitted the strict seclusion her mother had observed since the decease of Sir Thomas Heron. In the course of the evening, Mortimer enquired after lady Dinely, of whom he had heard but little since her marriage; for, knowing that his friend had been considerably affected by that event, he had kindly refrained from making those enquiries which he might otherwise have done.

Sir George, however, had left the room, and lady Heron said gravely, "I believe, Mr. Delmar, you will have the opportunity of seeing lady Dinely here in a few days; for George, contrary to my wish, has invited her to spend a week with us. Your long and intimate acquaintance with my son will enable you to comprehend the motive which actuates him in this proceeding."

"It is not difficult, indeed, my dear madam," returned Mortimer. "But I flatter myself that you need not have any dread of her visit; for, I think, nay, can almost say, I am sure, he has entirely overcome the attachment I thought he once entertained for his cousin."

"Such is, also, my opinion," returned her ladyship; "but lady Dinely must command a dangerous pity from him, since, I fear, she has decided unfortunately with regard to her marriage. You may have heard from George how reluctantly her friends consented to her union with sir Harry, and, unhappily, they have not been deceived, with respect to the sacrifice she made, in marrying such a man as he has since proved himself." The tears started into the good lady's eyes as she said this, and Mortimer, unwilling to give pain, quickly turned the conversation into another channel.

CHAPTER IX.

And shall presumptuous mortals heaven arraign,
And, madly, godlike providence accuse?
Ah! no, far fly from me attempts so vain,
I'll ne'er submission to my God refuse.

BYRON.

THE next day being wet, Delmar was prevented, as he had intended, from returning early to the cottage; and, after watching the weather an hour, in the vain hope that the atmosphere would clear, lady Heron proposed that they should all go over to Claybrook in the carriage in the afternoon: "You will then be able to see your young friend, my dear,"—she said to Beatrice.

To this all readily consented, and, to employ the time until one o'clock, Sir George conducted his friend to the billiard room, which had been

fitted up within the last few months, by his orders, as a means of furnishing pleasing amusement, when others, out of doors, were precluded. Having always been accustomed to participate in the pleasures of this pastime, in Hertfordshire, where it had for years constituted her father's chief resource, Beatrice played well, and Mortimer, himself an adept, was delighted to find so skilful an antagonist.

Many an intoxicating, many a gratifying hour, was spent by our friend Delmar from this period, in perambulations round that table, where, while seemingly intent upon the game, his pleased fancy warmed over the future, and he contemplated the time when he should think himself justified by circumstances, in demanding a return of that affection which he already began to feel was re-awakened for his fair companion. With the reader's permission, we will now creep into the barouche, with our hero, and take advantage of that conveyance to transport ourselves to the parlour of the good clergyman. To the surprise of all the party they found Ellen there, ready to receive them; she met Mortimer with every symptom of affection, and her countenance was betrayed into the first faint attempt at a

smile which he had seen, so faint indeed was it that, no sooner had he noted its creation, than, like the existence of the infant, whose birth, life, and death, are comprehended in one brief instant, it came and vanished! nipped in the bud! and again the features of the invalid resumed their former melancholy.

"You see, dear Mortimer," she said, after having acknowledged the salutation of the Herons, "you see I have not implicitly obeyed your injunctions, for I felt so much better this morning, that I have left my room to welcome and surprise you. I mean soon to be well again—do I not already look better?" she continued, appealing to Beatrice, who answered evasively, though in a manner calculated to tranquilise and satisfy her. The excitement, however, of seeing so many, added to the great exertion of stifling her grief, and assuming a false composure, soon exhausted the delicate girl, and produced faintness, which induced the inmates of the Castle to hasten their departure, not, however, without having entreated Delmar to consider the castle as his home, whenever he felt disposed to make it so, and affording Mr. Vernon every comfort and consolation, in the power of those noble,

generous minds to bestow, which have known hours of trial.

Though fatigued, from over exertion, Ellen would not return to her room, professing to derive much more advantage from Mortimer's society than the companionship of a hateful solitude, corroded by bitter reflection. Delmar easily saw through the motive of this resolution to rouse herself; he saw she was endeavouring to seem stronger daily, in order that she might the sooner claim his promised explanation, and he feared she would defeat her own purpose. Nevertheless, as he saw her surpass his expectations, day after day, and become more active, his apprehensions wore off, and, at the expiration of a fortnight, he was surprised to observe how vast a change, for the better, had been wrought apparently in her strength, since his return. She was now able to move across the room unassisted, though he still supported her up and down stairs; her eye no longer testified the influence of languor and dejection, but looked almost as bright as was its wont. It is true, her sighs were at times appalling, she spoke seldom, though oftener than before, and her emaciation still continued, notwithstanding the improvement in her appetite. In

considering these changes for the better, Mortimer felt contented with her progress, and in thinking over the other symptoms of indisposition, which yet required amendment, he consoled himself by recollecting all could not be done at once: "Rome was not built in a day," and another week might work wonders.

But our hero was less prone now to seek out evil!—In the short time which succeeded his arrival in the North, he had learned once more to look at the brighter side of life's opening picture. His eye was less jaundiced to the future—he had gathered fresh hope from his renewed acquaintance with Beatrice, of being happy with her; and his time had been pleasingly divided between the castle and the parsonage, though the latter, engrossed by far the greatest portion of it. Ellen, indeed, never seemed easy unless he was with her, and the conviction of affording her so much gratification, added to the great attraction of Beatrice's society, furnished little inducement to quit a spot where he felt he equally received and conferred benefits. He heard of his father's and sister's safe landing in Ireland,—he heard both were better, and anxiously desired him to join them. What could be more satisfactory? What else could

he anticipate? He promised both them, and himself, that in an another month he would be with them. Then, he thought, he should be able to carry consolation to the Baronial mansion of Fitz Eustace. Ellen, he flattered himself, would be nearly well—his business in London, which might occupy a fortnight, would be completed, and, perhaps—Beatrice might know, and have accepted, the offer of his affection. The radiant smile which hovered round her mouth, and the delicate blush upon her cheek, at his approach, whispered encouragement to his marked attentions; and had he not still felt the humiliation of the late events, he would have ascertained the state of her mind without farther delay. In the time he had determined yet to remain at the cottage, he felt opportunity would not be wanting for the avowal, and he resolved to postpone it until after Lady Dinely's visit. "We shall know each other still better then," thought he, "and now I am so happy that I almost dread a change in any way."

Mortimer arranged these ideas in his mind, as he returned to the parsonage, on the afternoon fixed for the arrival of Sir Harry and Lady Dinely, whom he wisely avoided meeting,

on the first day of their domiciliation at the castle. He had not slept at Mr. Vernon's the two previous nights, although he had not failed in his accustomed daily visits; consequently, when he entered the parlour, and announced his intention of staying with Ellen the whole evening, she expressed much pleasure at the prospect, particularly as Mr. Vernon had been obliged to go to F——, and would not return until the following morning. "You will now fulfil your promise, Mortimer," she said, "for we shall never find another opportunity half so propitious, and, you must allow that I have waited patiently, and deserve to be indulged."

A cold shiver ran through Mortimer, as he heard this demand, it was a task he would gladly have shunned, equally for her sake and his own; but he knew not how to avoid it. She had fixed upon him as the fittest person to make the disclosure—in his heart he had acknowledged the wisdom of the selection, and he had promised to execute the duty. He had put off the evil moment, and had seen her anxiously struggling to prepare herself for the hour of trial; and, now—when that time had arrived, and he saw she had nerved herself for the occasion, he was reluctantly obliged to comply.

"This evening, dear Ellen!" he exclaimed after a moment's hesitation: "if you are, indeed, resolute in your determination, I will do so; but I hope you will still spare yourself."

She placed her hand gently, but firmly, upon his arm, and, looking steadily in his face, said, with a solemnity which startled him; "Mortimer, I would not have required this from you, were it possible for me to be injured by it. For your sake, I would not contribute to my illness, but—fear not, my more than brother—the deed is already done—the blow is struck—ere many weeks the blighted hopes, the ruined name, the irreparable injuries of the nameless Ellen, will descend with her body to the ground whence it was taken."

"Dear Ellen, why speak in this frightful manner? Your health improves every day; and, I trust, you will yet continue to be a blessing to yourself and others. Think of your child."

"I do, Mortimer, but without anxiety. If she live, He who clothes the lilies of the field will take care of her; if not, I cannot wish her better provided for. Do not look so alarmed, dearest Mortimer; I thought you, at least, were not deceived by false hopes of my recovery."

"Until this moment I never doubted it, Ellen. You are out of spirits this evening. Come, let us change the subject: where is Mr. Vernon gone?"

"Ah! Mortimer, it makes me unhappy to think of him. What will become of him when I am gone? Nay, do not interrupt me—I would confide in you. To your ear alone I would commit my decided opinion of the approach of death.—To outward appearance I may be better, but it is the heart which feels the wound: mine is broken:—I feel that, by slow degrees, I shall sink, and ere long the lamp of my existence will be extinguished. Mr. Brownlow knows my situation, and I have cautioned him against making it known to any one, having resolved, at present, only to tell you my conviction, which I have done now, because I wish you to understand how safely you may commence your explanation this evening. You will not betray my confidence, dear Mortimer?"

"No, dear Ellen," replied he, as something very much like a tear swam in his eye, produced by the new light in which he now looked upon her case, and the sudden annihilation of his fondest hope of her recovery. "No; but

I cannot believe what you announce; it is so unlooked for—so sudden. I must see Brownlow."

"You shall do so to-morrow," returned Ellen; "but do not grieve for me, Mortimer: I am young to die, it is true; but I have been too much the object of fortune's frowns to value life on my own account. Even in this seclusion, I have known sin and grief enough to make me wish to pass from this world to another, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Death has no terrors for me, but, on the contrary, I shall receive it as a boon, and my only pain will be for the two or three dear friends I leave behind. Among them, my noble brother ranks high; unlike others, you have not disdained to treat me with affection: you have made me feel that affection and generosity are not unknown in that rank in society from which I have cruelly been excluded by birth; and I own I have considered you as my sole parent. Your love will comfort my last hours, and God will bless you for it!"

Tears rolled rapidly down her cheeks as she said the last words, and she gently pressed his hand.

Mortimer, who had not listened to the calm intimation of her own dissolution without considerable emotion, now rose and kissed her tenderly, as she reclined in her easy chair;—then quitted the room in that haste which the concealment of his agitation demanded. His bed-room was over the parlour, and, for a quarter of an hour, Ellen heard him traverse the chamber with disordered steps. Shortly before tea time, he rejoined her, and, during that social meal, they conversed without the slightest allusion to the previous conversation. Mortimer was a shade more thoughtful, while his companion, on the contrary, strove to divest her mind of its ordinary gloom, for his sake. Being again seated by the cheerful fire, a pause succeeded, Ellen almost feared to press for the disclosure of her untold misfortunes;—while Mortimer was equally reluctant to commence a narration of such harrowing importance unsolicited.

Both looked up at the same moment; their eyes met, and each comprehended the thoughts of the other.

"Mortimer," said Ellen quietly, "I am prepared; I cannot close my eyes in peace, until I know and can forgive the unhappy Charles's

errors. Tell me all now. See, I am quite calm."

This was, indeed, true, for she looked as pale and immovable as marble, and, as Mortimer pressed her hand, its icy coldness "thrilled to the bone."

"Ellen," he said, "I will obey you, painful as may be the office, I should be jealous of another holding it, for your dependance gratifies me. You will not require me to enter into your early history, which I heard from Mr. Vernon?"

She shook her head, and he proceeded to give her the account of Hamilton's marriage, and his subsequent conduct. When he reached that point which treated of his northern journey, and the discovery of Hamilton's villany, his ill-fated auditress covered her face with her thin hands, and groaned aloud. He paused, in silent pity, until, finding he had ceased, she looked up, and said, in tones of agony, "My child, my innocent child! Oh!—Hargrave, how could you doom her also to shame! That is the bitterest drop in my cup of life! Yet, go on, Mortimer;"—she added more quietly, "I must bear it."

Delmar passed rapidly over the rash act

of the detected Hamilton, for she now wept bitterly; and he went on to say how heartily he thought the misguided man had repented his crimes, and had sued for pardon.

"Did you stay with him to the last, Mortimer?" she enquired with a voice almost inaudible, from her convulsive sobs.

"I did, Ellen; and I believe the greatest remorse he felt was for the wreck he had made of your happiness. The whole of the sum he could call his own he has willed to you as a reparation, I suppose." His lip curled high as he spoke, and Ellen rejoined, with more asperity than he had witnessed in her before; "Did he think I would receive a price for my ruin? Did he consider me so mean, Mortimer? Your looks tell me you do not believe it."

"No, Ellen, I could not; I dared not."

"You are right. Never, never would I touch it! Oh God!" she added, clasping her hands wildly, "forgive his injustice! forgive him all, and teach me to do the same!" Her head sank on her bosom, and a deep silence ensued, which was at length broken by Ellen, who, addressing her companion, whose eyes were fixed upon the fire, said, "Fortunately there are no wants in the grave, therefore I shall not need his bounty—would he had not offered it—I

should have thought less severely of him."

"I hope it was done rather with a wish to serve, than to insult, you, Ellen—I wish you to look upon the offer of future provision less harshly; not only in charity to the deceased, but for the sake of one who must ever command my duty and respect—I mean my father, who has written to Mr. Vernon, offering you a settlement for life."

For a few moments she did not answer, but then she replied, steadily, "Mortimer, money cannot heal my wounds—the obscure Ellen will not accept anything but the pitiful gift of a wretched, bitter life, from the hands of Fitz Eustace—name it not again, or I must think you too despise me."

"Heaven forbid! I felt confident of your answer before I spoke, and did so only in obedience to my duty. From the first moment the proposal was made, Mr. Vernon peremptorily refused it for you; but, although I knew, as well as he, what would be your determination, I thought you ought to be allowed the opportunity of declaring it yourself."

"I thank you, most deeply, for all your kindness, dear Mortimer," she answered, as he said the last words, "I can never express half the gratitude I feel—But I am still the daughter of

Fitz Eustace, and I will not depend upon a parent who wronged my mother, and neglected me, until I am, unwillingly, made the instrument, in the hands of heaven, to recal his former cruelty most bitterly to his mind. Now he doubtless would heap benefits upon me, to silence his own conscience, and my just complaints—but he need not be under any apprehension, Mortimer, the grave reveals no secrets, and affection for you shall close my lips—You shall never have to blush on my account, and the tomb shall be the depository of my sorrows! We have been strangely thrown together, Mortimer, most strangely—doubtless for some wise end, and He who guides our destinies will recompense your virtues—Yes, your reward is in heaven, whither I am journeying so quickly!"

Seeing that this long and painful conversation had greatly overpowered the invalid, Mortimer proposed that she should seek repose. to which she assented, and they parted, with a deep sympathy for the recent sufferings of the other. Mortimer did not fail to mark the bright hectic which, for the first time that night, flushed her countenance, but which visited her cheek often afterwards, when anything agitated her.

CHAPTER X.

Sweet Maiden, dear my life must be,
Since it is worthy care from thee;
Yet life I hold but idle breath,
When love, or honour's weigh'd with death.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Again, next day, Mortimer was to dine at Sir George's, but, as it was not his intention to go there until late in the day, he spent all the forenoon in amusing, or rather endeavouring to amuse, Ellen, who seemed humbled, crushed, and dejected, even more than she had been the night before, on the first shock of the announcement. Not that she sought relief in violent grief—no!—that would not have cut the warm-hearted Delmar half so deep; but she looked so supremely wretched, so calm, patient, and despairing, that it seemed to wring his very soul to look at her. Twenty times, in the course of

the morning, did he reproach himself for giving her the information she wished, but neither mentioned the subject. Mr. Vernon returned, and Ellen resisted all Mortimer's wishes to send an excuse to the castle.

"Pray, pray, go Mortimer," she said, "if you are so solicitous about me, you will alarm Mr. Vernon, which I would, of all things prevent. I will go early to bed, and try to sleep, for I scarcely closed my eyes last night, and then you will find me better on your return."

Thus pressed, he hesitated no longer, but soon set off for his friend's house. At the distance of a mile from the village, he encountered Mr. Brownlow, and each immediately drew rein, for the purpose of salutation. The worthy mediciner enquired after his patient, whom he was then, he said, going to visit. Mortimer informed him of her increased indisposition, her conviction of her own danger, and his desire to be told the plain truth.

"My dear sir," answered Mr. Brownlow, kindly, "life is in the hands of the Almighty, and we must not give up all hope of our poor friend's recovery, though, I know, she herself entertains no idea of such an event—As you ask, however, for my candid opinion, and you

are one who is deeply interested in my patient, I will own that I consider her state a most precarious one—She has never recovered the first blow, and her illness has left the most dreadful traces of its ravages behind it."

"I fear this cough, Brownlow," rejoined Mortimer, earnestly.

"So do I, Mr. Delmar; it is an unpleasant symptom. Does it increase much?"

"To-day it has been more troublesome; indeed I think she is altogether very ill, so much so that I do not like her to be alone—I have thought that it might be adviseable to remove her to a warmer climate?"

"Change of scene might benefit her, Mr. Delmar,—but even that is doubtful, and the obstacles against a removal are so numerous that I fear such a plan is not likely to be effected."

"But it shall be effected, Brownlow, if it be within the range of possibility, and you deem it necessary. Do you think there is any reason to believe that her feelings of danger are well founded, or are they only the offspring of low spirits and debility?"

"I think, as I before said, that her state is most precarious; but I also hope that the

spring may restore her; at present it would be dangerous to remove her, we must look to the spring, sir, to do her good—we must not despond—she is young, and time and medicine may do much."

"I hope to heaven they will!" said Mortimer, thoughtfully: "but I own, I am very uneasy—however, do not let me detain you. I see you are unwilling to destroy all hopes, though your conscience forbids you to credit false ones."

Upon this they separated, the doctor to pursue his Esculapian avocations, and Mortimer to muse, as he rode slowly on, upon the thousand harassing, as well as pleasing, subjects, upon which his mind was ever bent.—He was ill satisfied with his conversation with the doctor, for he perceived that, with the characteristic caution of his class, Mr. Brownlow had avoided committing himself, and he would not speak confidently of either result of Ellen's illness. "Confound his dissimulation!" thought Delmar, "how I hate all his tribe. It must, however, be confessed they are useful nuisances sometimes; and, if I do not feel satisfied, I will persuade Ellen to see a Physician before I leave her." Having thus determined, he allowed his

ideas to be engrossed by Beatrice, and his delightful anticipations in that quarter, until the gates of Heron Park rose to his view. He was then suddenly aroused by the clatter of approaching horsemen, and, in a minute, the whole party drew up beside him. He looked up in surprise, and instantly recognised his friend the Baronet, and the ci-devant Mary Beaumont, with a handsome stranger, apparently some few years under thirty, whom he conjectured was no other than her husband.

"Mortimer," said Sir George, "I believe you are already acquainted with my cousin! Lady Dinely, you have not forgotten Mr. Delmar."

"It would be difficult to do so after once knowing him," replied Lady Dinely, smiling, as they mutually bowed, "allow me to introduce my husband to you," she continued,—"Mr. Delmar, Sir Harry Dinely; Sir Harry, Mr. Delmar."

"Though I have never had the pleasure of seeing you before, Mr. Delmar," said Sir Harry, "I have often heard my friend, Mrs. Hamilton, mention her brother in such terms as to make me anxious to cultivate his acquaintance, and I hope this will not be our only opportunity of meeting."

These preliminaries of an introduction being concluded, Mortimer enquired after Lady Heron and Beatrice, who Sir George informed him had accompanied the equestrian party in the carriage during the ride, until they reached the cottage, where they had expected to arrive before Mortimer's departure. Finding however, he had set off, his mother and sister had remained a short time with Ellen, while he with his visiters had hastened after Delmar. The latter expressed his pleasure and obligation for Lady Heron's kindness, and they conversed gaily until they reached the mansion.

"I think I shall ride back and meet Lady Heron, George," said Mortimer, suddenly turning his horse in the direction they had just come. "I suppose she will be again on the road by this time."

"Oh! it is scarcely worth while, Mortimer, they will be here soon, and I want you to see Sir Harry Dincly's famous horse, for I have been telling him how knowing you are in horse-flesh."

"Do you presume to think, George," said his cousin, archly, "that Mr. Delmar, who I know is so gallant, will sacrifice the pleasure of acting the gay cavalier, for the sake of seeing

that wretched animal Sir Harry prizes so highly, and in which I am sure I could never detect the smallest pretension to beauty?"

"That is because you do not understand it, Mary," replied her husband, in no way pleased at her contempt of his favourite. I wish you would confine your opinions to those things which belong to yourself," he added, as Mortimer galloped off, after saying, with a bow to Lady Dinely, how much he felt flattered by her opinion of him. She made her husband no reply, but entered the house with an air of easy nonchalance, while her spouse accompanied George to the former's favourite haunt, the stables.

Mortimer, meanwhile, retrod the road to the village, and about a mile and a half from the park joined the ladies. As he rode beside the carriage, which was an open one, they talked of their visit, and Delmar derived no small pleasure from the interest they expressed for Ellen. The way from Claybrook was a cross road, and, though kept in tolerable repair, was so narrow that, in passing any other vehicle, the young horseman was obliged to relinquish his station, and fall to the rear, but a moment's interval found him again at his post. Half

the distance had now been accomplished, when the attention of all was called to the sound of a carriage advancing towards them at a most furious rate.

"What, in the name of wonder, can that be Mr. Delmar!" said Lady Heron, anxiously, "something surely must have happened—"

"I fancy so indeed," replied he, "I will just ride forward if you please." These words were scarcely uttered when a turn in the road enabled them to see the occasion of their alarm, which was no way diminished by perceiving a cart, in which were a man and two children, coming with the speed of lightning down the road. At a glance, Delmar discovered that the driver had lost all command over the animal, and Beatrice's danger instantly rushed upon his mind. He cast one anxious look at her, as he ordered the coachman, for God's sake, to draw up as much as possible into the shallow ditch by the road-side, in hopes the horse might, by some happy chance, take advantage of the space thus afforded him, and avoid coming in contact with the Britchska.

"Where are you going, Mr. Delmar?" exclaimed Lady Heron.

"Oh! never mind me," replied he, quickly, as he watched the carriage being placed as he

desired, "nearer the hedge, still nearer," he continued to the coachman, "it will never pass—there, that must do."

"Oh! pray, pray get somewhere safe, Mr. Delmar, there, behind the carriage," urged Beatrice, surprised by the hazard of the moment into more than unusual expression of her feelings.

"Fear not for me, Miss Heron," he said, with a look which revealed his satisfaction at her solicitude, "I have more than one motive to encourage self-preservation."

"Indeed, Mr. Delmar, I am sure you will get hurt, you frighten me so much by staying so close here, that I hope, for my sake, if not for your own, you will move."

"Where can I be safer, or happier than by you, Miss Heron," he said, in a low tone: "however, for your sake, my life is sacred."

At any other time, his looks and manner would have called the eloquent blood into the cheek of Beatrice, but at this moment all other feeling was swallowed up in fear for his safety, and by a look she testified her thanks. These hurried sentences had passed in the space of a few moments, and the cart was now quite close to the spot.

"You had better stand by that gate, sir," said

the coachman. Mortimer turned to do so, but he had delayed his retreat so long that the danger was close at hand, and he only escaped destruction by leaping his horse over the gate into a field; for the unwieldy vehicle, after dashing past the Britchska, without doing any farther mischief than startling the horses, the terrified animal made a sudden sweep, and brought the cart in contact with the gate-post, and the consequences may easily be imagined. In a moment, its unfortunate occupants were thrown out, the hedge received one child, while its companions were ejected at either side. The concussion effectually restrained the terrified horse, for the footman, leaping to the ground, as soon as his mistress's danger was past, was enabled to prevent farther mischief by seizing the unguarded bridle.

Beatrice, who had seen the imminent peril of him she loved, and trembled in impotent alarm, was pale and agitated when he, an instant after, again stood by her. Consigning his steed to the coachman, who was now at his horses' heads, he said, "Thank Heaven! you are safe, I scarcely anticipated so fortunate a result."

"We must congratulate you on your escape,

Mr. Delmar," said Lady Heron, "at the same time that we thank you for your attention to us—but do let us out of the carriage, the poor man, I fear, is hurt."

This request was quickly complied with, and, as Delmar handed Beatrice down the steps, their eyes met, and, though hers were instantly cast down, he gathered enough from that glance to encourage him to take advantage of the moment—to warmly press the delicate hand which rested upon his arm. They all approached the place where the footman was raising the sufferer, who seemed perfectly insensible, and was bleeding profusely from a cut on the head.

"Do you not call this an unfortunate result, Mr. Delmar?" said Beatrice, as she gave him her handkerchief, with which he began to bind up the wound.

"I was actuated by much more selfish considerations, Miss Heron, when I said those words," returned he. "This accident is indeed bad enough."

Beatrice turned hastily to the child, who appeared little injured, although, after disengaging itself from the hedge, it ran up to its father, crying piteously; the other, Lady

Heron and her daughter endeavoured in vain to pacify. It screamed terribly, and they soon discovered that its arm was broken. The broken limb was placed in a sling, and, as soon as it was ascertained that the man belonged to Claybrook, it was agreed that assistance should be sent as soon as the ladies should arrive at the castle, for the cart was too much injured to be of any use in conveying the man home. Mortimer persisted in remaining with the servant, at the disastrous spot, in the benevolent intention of assisting the man, who now gave some tokens of returning animation. The plan was on the eve of being put in execution, when another party arrived, who, being inhabitants of the village, and friends of the countryman, readily undertook to do all that was necessary in the affair. After seeing the sufferers placed in the conveyance belonging to the new comers, and enjoining every care possible, Mortimer was going to re-mount his horse to accompany his charge home, when Lady Heron said, "Come, Mr. Delmar, let Thomas ride your horse, while you get into the carriage with us; you have been in danger enough to-day to make me keep you under my own eye. You really were

too rash, besides the twilight is coming on, and, since you professed to have come here expressly to take care of us, you can attend to your duty better."

It may be supposed he did not require pressing, and he answered in terms of gallantry, as he seated himself opposite Beatrice. The accident furnished ample fund for discussion, as they rapidly approached the castle, and both the ladies joined in commending Mortimer's conduct, at the same time that they expressed their fear at the peril in which he had been placed.

Oh! how delightful is it to one who loves, to hear the object of his preference declare an unqualified interest in his behalf! How grateful is commendation from those sweet lips! How penetrating the gentle smile of kindness that attends it!

Mortimer's heart bounded with love and hope, as he listened to the thrilling tones of Beatrice's voice. He felt assured of her affection, and for the satisfaction of that moment, he felt he would willingly have risked ten times more than he had done. Arrived at home, they were met at the door by Sir George, in considerable alarm at their delay, but an

explanation was soon afforded, and he united in thanking his friend for taking his office for him, and fulfilling it so entirely to his wish.

"Well, Mr. Delmar," said Lady Dinely, with an arch smile, as he handed her to the dining room. "I hear you are again a favourite at Mr. Vernon's."

"I have, indeed, been much there, lately," replied Mortimer, "but intend being off for Ireland, soon."

"Now you do not mean me to give credit to that declaration, I hope, or I shall absolutely think you have been saying sweet things to some inconstant fair, and again been repulsed. I shall always think a hasty journey to Ireland a suspicious manœuvre with you. My memory is a good one, and I recollect, though some years have past since, that you left us very suddenly, after a long attendance at that same cottage."

Mortimer's dark complexion but ill concealed the colour which dyed his cheek at these words, for Beatrice followed close, and would, most probably, overhear them. More piqued and angry than he was aware, he rejoined, somewhat sharply, "I suppose you remember, Lady Dinely, that Sir George was

my companion in that trip—do you conceive he was alike actuated?"

She coloured highly, and Delmar was sorry for his hasty reply, but she turned it off with a laugh, saying, "Travelling has made you brilliant, Mr. Delmar, I see you are a preux chevalier, armed at all points."

By this time they had reached the room, and no more was said; indeed from that time he suffered no annoyance from her badinage, for she found that he knew how to wield her own weapons.

The evening was one of peculiar happiness to our hero, he saw nothing but Beatrice, though he forbore to annoy her, in the presence of her friends, by any uncommon display of his admiration, or rather his tender regard. So blind, indeed, was he to every thing around him, except her, that he did not detect the ill-suppressed indignation of Sir Harry Dinely, at the flirtation of his wife with a young Scotchman who, with his sister, were on a visit to Sir George.

Our friend Mary, with her change of name, had not changed her disposition for coquetry, on the contrary, it seemed to have gained strength by time and circumstance. Her hus-

band was, like many individuals, all smiles so long as everything was subservient to his will, but his overbearing temper would bear no opposition. Then he became morose, and, as love had little to do in his marriage, his wife felt the whole force of his harshness, if he were displeased, which was but too often the case. He demanded constant attention, and perfect submission on her part, which, in the early days of matrimony, when all was new, she endeavoured to gratify him in; but she was young and lively, and finding it was far easier to please generally, than individually, she still continued to indulge the propensity which had cost her the love of her cousin. She soon discovered what a mistake she had made in her choice, but her high spirit forbad her to repine at the consequences of her own folly; and she wisely reconciled herself, as much as possible, to her situation. She seldom did any thing intentionally to displease Sir Harry, but indifference ruled most of her actions towards him, and soon became a complete defence against his ill temper, which was not improved by this conduct. Thus circumstanced, dissension ever reigned between them, though, unless Mary's flirting was very conspicuous, Sir Harry never permitted his anger

to appear, in public. That was what he could not tolerate, for he was aware of her disposition before marriage, but had suffered pecuniary considerations to supersede that, and every thing else; consequently, felt more irritated, because he had, he knew, wilfully subjected himself to this constant annoyance. Lady Dinely's manners were naturally engaging, and many were those she captivated for the moment, who, like this north countryman, knew nothing of her character.

It had been Lady Heron's dread that, in this visit, her son should be made uneasy, but to her great joy she soon saw she was mistaken, for Sir George, though kind, was cool, and evidently kept on his guard, particularly when he observed she played her former game. Mortimer, too, knew her of old, and was not to be deceived by her gaiety into any attentions which might pain Beatrice; indeed, as we have already said, his heart was so entirely devoted to the latter that, on the evening in question, he was dead to every thing but her. About twelve o'clock all had retired, except the two friends, and they were standing with their candles lighted, ready to separate, when Sir George said, "Well, Delmar, what do you think of Lady Dinely?"

"I would not be her husband, Heron, that is all," he replied, laconically.

"You are about right there," answered George, "she seems just as gay as ever."

"It is fortunate Sir Harry does not mind her badinage," said Mortimer, smiling.

"Not mind it, Delmar, not mind it! why where have your eyes and ears been the last few hours? He has been chafing terribly, and I dare say she is in for a famous curtain lecture to-night. I hear he has an infernal temper, did you not see how savage he looked at her, as she laughed and talked with Mc Arthur?"

"No, indeed, I thought he seemed a very pleasant man, and only pitied him because I thought him a fool to be so quiet."

The young men had again approached the fire, and George drew a chair close to the fender, and motioned his companion to do the same, as he rejoined, "Ah! you do not know him yet. I fancy if both were more quiet, they would be happier. Beatrice says, from what Mary has told her, they are an ill-assorted pair, and my own observations induce me to think they go on very uncomfortably. It is a pity, for she is really a nice girl, if it were not for that one failing. Not that I would have her now if I could," he added, quickly, "for

her perseverance in pursuing Mc Arthur, has quite disgusted me. I assure you, I congratulate myself upon having had a lucky escape, though I have not told any one so but yourself; still," he added, pensively, "I cannot help pitying her, for I think she would have been very different with a less mercenary man. I suppose her money was all he wanted,—however, I should certainly be better satisfied if he were more kind to her."

When he paused, Mortimer made no answer, but sat absorbed in thought, and it was very evident to George he had been spending his breath in vain. A short silence followed, when the baronet resumed as he rose, "You are not in a talking humour I fancy, Mortimer, so, if you please, as the fire is none of the brightest, but, like your conversation, somewhat languid, I will make my exit."

"I really beg your pardon, Heron, I own my inattention extreme; but, I was pondering on a subject of vast importance to me, and, as you are partially interested in the business, perhaps I may as well take the present opportunity of opening my mind to you."

Again Sir George took his place by the expiring embers, and Mortimer continued, "I have now, George, been sometime a constant

visiter here, and have ever received the greatest attention and kindest welcome from you, and Lady Heron, which, believe me, I fully appreciate."

"What, in the name of all that's miraculous, Mortimer, do you mean by this solemn opening to your confidential information, for such I take your communication to be, from the hour you have chosen to make it—midnight is an ominous time."

"We are not always able to controul our actions, Heron, or I might have selected a fitter occasion for my disclosure; however, not to detain you long, I will be brief. Years have elapsed since I first loved your sister, but I was deterred from declaring myself then, by a fancied coldness on her part. I believe I was to blame—over hasty—for I have every reason to hope that she is willing to listen favourably to my proffered affection. In the last few weeks, I have ascertained that, unless I can obtain her hand, I cannot be happy; and to you as her nearest and dearest relation, I apply for permission to plead my cause to her. I need not explain my prospects, my intentions, farther; our acquaintance is not the creation of a week or month."

The baronet had purposely avoided inter-

rupting his companion during his statement; but, as soon as he concluded, he replied, with a glowing cheek and pleasure sparkling in his eye, "What you have just said does not surprise me, my dear Mortimer. I know how excellent, how delightful, Beatrice is, and I have not been blind to the growing attachment of my friend. That she is worthy of every sentiment of love and esteem I am well aware, and had I felt any alarm, or had I not thought that he was a man calculated to make her as happy as she deserves to be, I would long ago have put a stop to an acquaintance which might have destroyed her peace of mind. No, Delmar, did I not feel perfectly convinced Beatrice's happiness would be safe in your keeping, you had not found the welcome here you have done. But I think you said she is still ignorant of your preference?"

"I did, George: as far as words are concerned, she is. I desired to know your sentiments before I explained myself to her—"

"For my sister I must not answer, though I believe I might safely do so; but for myself, I can truly say that the man who has been my dearest friend so long, I shall be most happy to receive as a brother. My good mother you must speak to yourself in the morning, for I

shall leave you to work your own way, unless you require my services, being convinced such things are best managed by the party most interested." As he spoke, he offered his hand to his friend, who said, as he grasped it warmly, "You have done all I require, George, and I thank you for it, you have made me the happiest fellow in the world."

"You forget that I am only an inferior potentate," returned the baronet, laughing, "whose opinion you have consulted. Do not be too sanguine of success—woman is an incomprehensible being."

"Oh! I have very little fear—good night, George," answered our hero, again taking his candle, and then leaving the room.

"Well!" thought Sir George, as he stood still a moment before he followed him, "well! I am glad both for Beatrice's and his own sake, that he has candidly avowed his attachment; and I am sure, my dear mother will be greatly rejoiced at it, for Mortimer holds no insignificant place in her esteem, and her highest pleasure is to make her children happy. Mary, too, she would have saved from sorrow, if possible."

CHAPTER XI.

In the mild eyes that shone before him,
Beaming that blest assurance, worth
All other transports known on earth,
That he was loved—well, warmly loved.—

MOORE.

We must pardon Mortimer, if, on the kind accordance of Sir George, he for a space forgot all the anxiety, all the trouble, he had recently experienced, and gave himself up entirely to the pleasing realization of his hopes, which he foresaw the next day would produce. Blessed with such sleep as is known only in youth, the night was quickly spent, and the lover rose the following morning with alacrity, to take another important step towards the goal of felicity. Knowing Lady Heron to be an early riser, and that she passed sometime in her boudoir before the breakfast hour, which was ten o'clock, he de-

termined to see her before that meal, that his fate might be decided without delay. "Then, if his suit prospered, he should meet his beloved Beatrice with two-fold delight, while, if, on the contrary—but, he could not think of any failure—had not George given him every encouragement, every reason to believe he should not be rejected? and it was madness to contemplate the dark side."

Lady Heron's morning room was not a receptacle of luxury, or of selfish enjoyment, which she kept entirely to herself. No! she was by far too fond of seeing smiling faces around her, to like an apartment dedicated to herself and solitude. It was a kind of study where books, music, or work, were the amusements, and where all who liked such recreations were welcome. Here, Mortimer had spent many happy hours in the society of Beatrice, and had fed his growing love upon her smiles, or, listened rapturously to her voice, as she warbled the airs he selected.

It was about half past nine, when he stood at the door of this little sanctorum, irresolute whether to enter at once, or to knock for admission, and he had just determined upon the latter, when it was opened, and Lady Heron appeared in the act of coming out. "My dear

madam," he said, without any hesitation, "you must pardon my early intrusion, but I come to solicit a few moments' conversation with you, previous to our meeting for the day."

"I need scarcely say your request is granted with pleasure, Mr. Delmar," she returned, and, re-entering the apartment, whither he followed her, "though I hope," she added, with an enquiring look, "your unexpected visit is not occasioned by any alarming occurrence? You seem agitated!"

"Dispel your fears then, dear Lady Heron, nothing has happened to my knowledge to call forth your anxiety. I am come to place my future fate in your hands: to be sentenced by one word from you, to bliss or misery—to demand, in short, your consent to becoming the possessor of your daughter's hand. I have loved her long, Lady Heron, she is all my imagination has conceived most estimable, most delightful in a wife—and I intreat you will not destroy my dreams of happiness. Let me aspire to a place in your affection beside my friend, and I promise you shall never have to repent granting me the privilege of a son. My every thought, every care, shall be for Beatrice, and all in the power of affection shall be employed to form her felicity. I am not an

adept at professions, but my actions shall testify my love for her, and my gratitude to you, if you grant my petition."

The good lady's eyes were suffused with tears, and an instant elapsed ere she rejoined, "Your request, Mr. Delmar, is one of great importance to a mother, perhaps more so to me than many others, for, in my dear Beatrice, I have found the kind friend and attentive nurse, as well as the exemplary daughter—to resign her to another will, therefore, be a struggle, but all selfish considerations shall be set aside for her good, if what you have asked will tend to such. George, however, must be consulted."

"I am not under any alarm on his account, Lady Heron," interrupted Delmar, "he has already given me the strongest assurances of his approbation of my suit. On yourself, and Beatrice, only, depend my hopes and fears, my pleasure, or pain, and I trust you will not keep me in a cruel suspense."

"Beatrice's choice, my dear Mr. Delmar, ever has, and ever must be perfectly unbiassed by me—she is quite competent to judge for herself—and I may therefore say that you may apply to her in all confidence, for I know that without her heart, you could never obtain her

hand. If my voice be necessary to pave your way, it will be heard only in the language of a parent, anxious for her child's well-being, and I have no hesitation in saying that, were I to select a partner for her, I know of no one I could have preferred to the young friend who now stands beside me—Nay, do not thank me yet, Mr. Delmar," she continued, with a smile, as he began to pour forth his gratitude, "do not thank me yet, Beatrice is the principal person to be gained; therefore the most arduous part of the business is still to be overcome." (Mortimer smiled.) "Your looks declare you are fearless on that point.' Well! I will go to Beatrice, and apprise her of the honour you intend her; for I am sure you have not intimated your sentiments to her, for she has no secrets from me."

"Your are right, dear madam," replied the happy Delmar, "I have not spoken to Miss Heron, but, since I have obtained your concurrence, I beg you will allow me to plead my own cause—I believe Beatrice is already my own, but permit me to be the first to ascertain that point?"

"You shall," returned Lady Heron, kindly, "I will not deprive you of so great a pleasure—I will send for her here." So saying, she laid

her hand on the bell, but was deterred from sounding it by the entrance of her daughter, who was instantly on the point of retreating, when she saw Delmar. Lady Heron, however, said, "Beatrice, my dear, come in—we want you in our counsels."

"I came to say, mama, that the breakfast is ready, and that Mary and Sir Harry are both down," answered Beatrice, coming in.

"I will not keep them then," replied her mother, "but will leave you to answer the question Mr. Delmar came to ask me."

The cheek of Beatrice flushed, as Lady Heron quitted the room, and, for an instant, she appeared undecided whether or not to follow her; but our hero did not give her time to hesitate long, for the door had scarcely closed upon Lady Heron, when he said, "I trust you are not going to refuse the office your mother has delegated you to perform, Miss Heron—I hope my question is not one calculated to alarm you."

She looked at him, with a faint smile, as he took her hand, which trembled violently, his own he knew was hardly more steady, as he pursued, "You will stay to hear me declare, what indeed I believe you have known some time, how much my happiness is in your hands—how long, how fondly, I have contemplated the

hour, when I might consider myself authorised, by your kindness, to throw myself on your generosity, and ask the inestimable gift of this little hand—Let me flatter myself you have seen my unceasing endeavours to win your esteem, your love, Beatrice—my never failing attempts to obtain that favour, which must eventually ripen into affection. But tremble not so, I am the one to feel alarmed, who see the seal of my fate as yet undecided—Speak to me, Beatrice, in pity speak to me—Am I to call you mine?" As he spoke the last words, he led her gently to a chair, and, while she struggled with her feelings, and strove to speak, he again said, "This silence gives me courage, dear Beatrice, for I am sure you would never deceive me by false hopes. Our acquaintance is not new, you have known me as the friend of your brother, and I have loved you ardently long, long before I had any reason to believe you returned my affection."

"My mother," said Beatrice, faintly, as her tears began to flow in unrestrained freedom.

"Your mother consents," rejoined Mortimer, "and if your hesitation proceeds from that uncertainty, my doubt is solved, for, from her, I hold a kind declaration of her consent—give me then, dearest, one little word to seal my

possession of this coveted treasure—I could offer you rank, and wealth, did I think such would enhance the value of my love—but I should scorn to owe, to such paltry means, a hand I could not gain from love."

He spoke warmly, perhaps more haughtily than he intended, and his companion cast her swimming eyes up towards his face in some surprise; but she said, with tolerable composure, "I reciprocate that feeling, Mr. Delmar; and were anything to make me hesitate at this moment, it would be the prospect of a coronet, which, I believe, is not unfrequently a crown of thorns."

"You shall not find it so, Beatrice: why not consider it a wreath of roses, the brilliancy and sweet odour of which shall be emblematical of the soft smiles and breathings of love!—It shall be my study to realise this picture, when heaven wills that I should support the dignity of our house—May that day be at present far removed! But you have not yet bid me hope, though I dare not think of the reverse—suffer me once more to ask—that dear hand is——"

"Yours, Mr. Delmar," interposed Beatrice, firmly extending it towards him, and, at the same time, placing the other over her burning brow.

We need not detail how many fervent kisses Mortimer impressed upon that cherished hand, or how his heart bounded lightly in his breast, as he heard her last words, neither do we deem it necessary to relate the numberless vows and extravagances of a lover—a fortunate lover, when he learns, for the first time, that he is in turn beloved; but will simply inform our readers that an hour had elapsed ere Beatrice or Mortimer recollected that breakfast was waiting, or that love was not an antidote to hunger. Happy, however, as the former was, she could not immediately join the party round the breakfast table, she could not encounter the numerous enquiries on her unusually late appearance, and, therefore, on leaving the boudoir, she sought her own room, while the joyous Delmar repaired to the parlour. He skilfully parried Lady Dinely's jests upon his tardiness, and Lady Heron was not long in discovering by his looks how his conference with her daughter had terminated. She soon after learnt from Beatrice, in what manner his proposals had been received, and George united with her in expressing entire approbation of the connection.

"Now, my dear fellow," said the young Baronet, after he had heard Mortimer's success,

as he shook him by the hand, "now I may say how long I have desired and hoped for this event—how long I have seen that you and my dear sister were fitted to each other, and how perfectly I am satisfied with the new relation she destines for me. That you will not repent your choice I can safely promise, for, although a brother's praises may not be strictly admissible, I cannot help saying that she is all a man should look for in matrimony; and, if happiness be not your portion, no pity will you get from me, for I shall then look suspiciously upon my friend."

"That time will never come, dear George," said Beatrice, who had entered the room, and heard the latter part of his speech. "If Mortimer be as determined to follow the dictates of duty and affection as I am, happiness must be the consequence."

"Do you doubt it, Beatrice?" said her lover with a smile, testifying at once his pleasure at her answer, and confidence in her love. She replied only by giving him her hand, and, as George turned away, he said, with a laugh, "Well, I am glad you are so confident in each other; but what think you of a walk, or ride, for I see Sir Harry going to his darling

haunt. You stay with us to-day, of course, Delmar?"

"Most willingly, George, but I believe I must write a few lines to Ellen, who expected me home to-day."

"Why not go over to her?" said his friend, "You can be back long before dinner. I am sure Beatrice will allow the justice of your going to the cottage."

Delmar turned, enquiringly, to her, and she said, "I hope you do not think it necessary to disappoint Ellen, on my account, Mr. Delmar; I should be sorry to be the cause of giving her pain, which your remaining here this morning might effect. You had better go, but need not stay long. Remember, I wish you to do as you think best."

"Your wish is a command, Beatrice," he replied, "and I will obey." Mortimer, accordingly, speedily gallopped to Claybrook, where he was, as usual, most welcome.

The subsequent three or four days rolled away in the gratifying duties required of Mortimer by Beatrice and the invalid. The former, in avowing her love, had thrown aside all that chilling reserve, all that distance, which had equally pained and deceived her lover,

and appeared in her real character of an affectionate girl, ready to bestow her entire confidence on the man she preferred, not for any worldly considerations, but from esteem based on the purest feelings.

Ellen continued much in the same state, though she would not permit Mortimer to entertain hopes of her permanent amendment. "My sand is not yet expended, dear Mortimer," she said to him on one occasion, "and perhaps, indeed, some time may elapse ere I am called away; but I cannot bear to see you rest your expectations upon so precarious a foundation as the momentary pause in my complaint, before it takes its last stride towards the great goal for which we all must run. I am content with the prospect, therefore why these vain regrets? Let me hear them no more, but tell me rather about the gentle friend you say has consented to become your wife. She is so good, so amiable, that, did I not know Mortimer Delmar so well, I should tremble, from experience, for her. Yet," she added, in a low, mournful tone, "Hargrave was all love, all affection to me—though Hamilton has destroyed me."

Delmar, anxious to withdraw her from so sad a topic, complied with her request, and

spoke of Beatrice, whom he told her he should depute his substitute at Claybrook on his departure, which could not now be long delayed. Beatrice, by her kindness, had won the regard of the mourner, and her frequent visits latterly, had afforded both comfort and consolation to her; it was, therefore, with the most sincere pleasure that she learnt Mortimer's attachment, and the probability of her assuming his office during the period of his unavoidable absence. It may, perhaps, be deemed strange, nay, even imprudent, by the over fastidious, for Beatrice to devote a portion of her time to the benevolent employment of soothing, or endeavouring to soothe the sorrows of the unhappy Ellen. It is true, she had become the dupe of an artful villain, and had unconsciously sullied her fair fame, and, in the eyes of the world, she was unworthy of notice, but, in the estimation of those who knew her, she was only the innocent, the suffering victim. Her thoughts, her feelings, were as pure as ever, and the Herons were far too high minded to permit prejudice, or fastidiousness, to overcome their kindness. They saw Ellen afflicted, both in mind and body, and one and all strove to alleviate her sorrows. Perhaps Beatrice's growing partiality for

Mortimer heightened her pleasure in comforting the mourner, since she observed how kindly he took their disinterested attention.

The week which the young lover had fixed, as the term of his farther stay, now wanted but two days more of its completion, when he set off with Beatrice in the pony phaeton, to pass the morning with Ellen. Half an hour's drive brought them to their journey's end, where Delmar found letters requiring his immediate presence in the Metropolis. The unwelcome summons had been delayed until the last moment, in expectation of his daily arrival, and, consequently, no time was to be lost. A shade of vexation passed over Mortimer's countenance, as he re-folded the obnoxious epistle, and stood in deep thought.

"You are uneasy, Mortimer," said Beatrice, who was the first to notice his dissatisfaction.

"I am," he replied, "but scarcely ought to be so, for this letter only calls me hence four-and-twenty hours sooner than I had intended to leave you; compelling my departure by to-morrow's early coach. Indeed, I fancy I ought to go to-night—but do not look so alarmed, dear Beatrice, I will certainly postpone my journey until the morning."

"Not for me, dear Mortimer, if you think

it better to go sooner," answered Beatrice, "I would not have you consider me in the least; I am too confident of your unwillingness to pain us to think you would enforce an unnecessary measure."

"You are right, dear friend," answered Ellen, pressing her hand, "you do him justice, but it is difficult to resign one whole day of his loved society, on the brink of the grave."

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke, and Beatrice said, in surprise, "The grave, Ellen! why alarm us at this moment with such an idea?"

"Mortimer is not alarmed, Beatrice, he knows the truth too well; but here comes Mr. Vernon—not a word on this subject whilst he is here."

The good rector was soon informed of the annoying contents of the letter, and joined in the general disappointment. "But, my dear young friends," he said, "I trust we shall some day meet again, under more favourable auspices, and happier times, when the gloom of our recent trial shall have worn off, and Ellen's health will be fully re-established." The invalid smiled sadly, and he continued, as he looked kindly at Beatrice, "I know that, while we lay an embargo upon the movements

of Miss Heron, we are sure to have the pleasure of seeing you again, Mr. Delmar, shortly."

Beatrice blushed, and Mortimer replied, "True, my dear sir, more than one fetter has bound me here, and I hope long to be held a willing captive in such light, but durable chains." Affection beamed in his eye, and he met an answering look from his companions, who, after discussing his departure, which was decided to take place on the morrow, continued, for some hours, to find that pleasure in social converse which must emanate from the unrestrained communion of three minds so pure, and yet so various in their textures and ingredients. Alas! why should hours of happiness speed on the wings of the wind, and pass away almost before we can taste the intoxicating draught!

Our friends found this truth forcibly, when three o'clock arrived, and it was time to separate. Beatrice had been made acquainted with Ellen's secret, and she sorrowed at one and the same time for her poor friend and her lover; while Mortimer was affected in leaving Ellen, over whom he had unwillingly drawn the curtain of grief, and, possibly of death; but she, divining his forebodings, murmured

in a tone too low for Mr. Vernon to hear, as he pressed the tribute of affection upon her hectic cheek, "Grieve not, my dearest brother, something tells me we do not part now for the last time. Three months—and then tarry not on your return."

As he drove away he waved his hand, and, after returning the tender adieu, she retired to pour out her soul in prayers for his preservation.

Greatly as Beatrice felt the approaching loss of her lover, she had instantly consented to, nay, had urged, his absence, because she had so little regard for herself, when the advantage, or the duty, of one she loved was implicated. She would not, by a single regret, add to his pain in leaving her, or by repeated injunctions of constant correspondence and hasty return, augur a doubt of his fidelity. She rather strove to dissipate the temporary sadness the near approach of his journey cast over him. Mortimer saw her design, and he loved her the better for it.

It was intended that our hero, after accomplishing Mrs. Hamilton's business in town, should proceed forthwith to secure Lord Fitz Eustace's approval to his marriage, for, up to the present time, he had not made his family

aware of his prospects, intending to wait until he could personally confer with his noble relations, upon so delicate and important a subject. In the course of three months he purposed returning to claim the hand of Beatrice, and then, as soon as circumstances would permit, he was to be united to her. This had already been discussed and settled, consequently, there was not anything to interrupt the calm flow of their affection during the few short hours of their being together. Many were the hopes and fears Delmar expressed in regard to Ellèn, in which his gentle friend entirely sympathised, promising to see her frequently, to convey every consolation in her power, and rigidly to preserve silence on the subject of her fatal anticipations, from all, except Lady Heron.

"With her dearest Mortimer," she said, fondly, as he leant over the back of the sofa on which she was sitting somewhat apart from the rest of the party, who were crowded round some valuable prints, just arrived from the continent, "with her I have no concealments, and her more potent care, I know, will instantly be united to mine in this matter."

"That I leave to your discretion, Beatrice; you have heard why Ellen wishes the circum-

stance unknown at present, and I fearlessly confide in your promise to summon me here on her account, if alarming symptoms should arise. I saw Brownlow yesterday, who still hopes a favourable change, though I can perceive he is less sanguine than he was. I hardly know if it be kind to wish her to recover, for I find such a fearful wreck of happiness in her heart, whenever I have ventured to touch upon the past, that it quite surprises me how she can cover her deep wounds with so placid a deportment."

"I believe it is for your sake, Mortimer; for her old nurse Margaret told me, a few days since, that she wished you never left the cottage, for her poor young lady did nothing but fret then."

"Hah, indeed! what a violence she must do her feelings for me, then!"

"What cannot love do, Mortimer?" Beatrice enquired, affectionately.

"It cannot always overcome selfish man, Beatrice," he replied, sadly, "as Ellen has discovered, to her cost."

"True, I had forgotten that, but I meant virtuous love; not passion."

"I believe love is omnipotent, whether for good or ill, Beatrice, but the affection of men

and women is widely different, although, perhaps, equally powerful. I fear our sex has rarely manifested the devotion of yours, and if Ellen have acted as you say, it is another proof of her superiority. Poor thing! would to heaven I had been able to shield her from her present misery!"

"Do you know, Mortimer, when first you became acquainted with this village blossom, I was tempted to fear and dislike her."

"Ah! you did not know her, then—you knew not her worth."

"Say rather, I did not know you, Mortimer. I did not know how much I wronged the love I coveted, and which I yet repulsed. Although I was angry with myself for appearing unkind, I could not change while I thought she was preferred to me. The mystery was never explained, until your sudden return."

"And then, perhaps, you pitied me," said he, smiling. "I can welcome the sentiment in that instance, because we are told it is 'akin to love.' But come," he continued, "let us see these prints, upon the merits of which George is descanting so scientifically."

No farther conversation passed between them, as they joined in the evening's amusements, and the hours flew by on time's ever

revolving wheel. The coach, by which Delmar intended to travel, passed the Park gates at nine o'clock, therefore scanty time was happily available for leave-taking, that most painful gratification, which is ever dreaded, yet ever sought!

Words were few—neither were given to professions, and the soft language of the eye conveyed more meaning than the greatest eloquence. They separated with looks of confidence, which did not belie the feelings which rested in the heart of each, and the "first kiss of love" impressed by Mortimer on the cheek of Beatrice, appeared the seal of his truth. Sir George accompanied his friend across the park, and he commenced his journey, laden with the best wishes of the Herons, for his safe and speedy return.

CHAPTER XII.

Then with a father's frown at last
He sternly disapproved.

MALLET.

BUSINESS detained Mortimer fully as long in the Metropolis as he had anticipated, and it was not until the end of six weeks, from his quitting the castle, that he reached Ireland. He found Mrs. Hamilton so much depressed in spirits that Lord Fitz Eustace was anxious to remove her to the continent, a plan she had hitherto strongly opposed, preferring strict seclusion for the present, at least. His Lordship, however, seemed bent upon setting off in the course of a short time; for, on the very first evening of his son's arrival, he exposed his whole intentions, and endeavoured to persuade Mortimer to accompany them. This, of course, was declined, and when Delmar saw that his refusal excited his father's surprise,

he candidly owned he was under the necessity of returning to England in a month at farthest. "But for what purpose," he said, "he must beg to defer mentioning until the following morning, when it was his intention to request a few minutes' private conversation with his lordship."

An audience was readily granted, and, consequently, Mortimer followed his father from the breakfast-table to the library. "Well Mortimer," commenced the latter, as the door closed upon them, why have you made this demand? Not to trouble me any more, I hope, with that confounded Claybrook business, for, as I have granted the annuity, I consider myself exempt from farther taxation of any kind."

"I am sorry, my Lord," began his son, when he interrupted him hastily—

"Nay, I thought as much, I would have told you my suspicions last night, Mortimer, had I not feared to distress your sister, by a reference to that subject—I will have nothing more to do with it, and, I must say, I am not a little astonished at your taking so much interest in a person, who has involved your family partly, in her own disgrace."

"You mistake, my lord, in supposing I came to make demands upon your generosity, or, to

displease you by an unnecessary recurrence to past events. I know, from experience, the painful nature of the subject too well to recal it. No, my Lord, I wish to discharge my duty conscientiously to all, and therefore deliver this paper as I received it, without a single comment." As he spoke, he laid a letter on the table, and continued, "On my own affairs, principally, I would speak."

Lord Fitz Eustace immediately opened the letter, notwithstanding his asserted desire to be spared farther annoyance from Claybrook; and Mortimer, perceiving his design, instantly paused. An enclosure dropped on the table, which his lordship disregarded, while he perused the few words traced in the envelope. "Mortimer," he then said, sternly, "you know the contents of this?"

"Pardon me, sir, I only guessed. That letter was committed to my charge at the moment of my departure."

"By whom?"

"Ellen, herself, sir."

"And do you believe she wrote that of her own accord? Read it—" He put the paper into his son's hand, and, while the latter cast his eye over the lines, the baron raised the order for the sum of money, which he had sent

to Mr. Vernon, and, after looking over it, deliberately committed it to the flames. The note ran as follows:—

"My Lord,

Permit me to enclose you the paper bearing your signature, and written in my favour. Your munificence, my Lord, is as useless as it is unwelcome; the first, because I have a provision in heaven, of which I shall soon take possession; and the second, on account of the contemptible light in which you must hold me. Yet, think not, in refusing your bribe, I intend farther to importune or disgrace you, as you seem to fear. No! my Lord—all the ill I have ever known has been derived from you and yours, consequently, I can have little inducement to force myself into the notice of a Nobleman who has wronged, and now despises, me. But you have still another, even a surer guarantee of my silence, in the affection I feel for your son, whose excellence I venerate—Never shall he have the cause to blush on account of my connection with him, although to dare to call him a brother—would have been my proudest prerogative.

I am, my Lord,

The dying Ellen."

When Mortimer looked up, his father repeated the question, and the former replied in the affirmative.

"And is she indeed one so much above the common herd as to spurn wealth? Then I have been mistaken in supposing that low minds were ever found in low stations."

"She has the high spirit of a Fitz Eustace, my Lord."

"Aye! and the worm will turn if trodden on," returned Lord Fitz Eustace, thoughtfully. "But she is ill it seems."

"And no hopes of a recovery, I believe, sir."

"Hah! removed so soon!—But enough of her for the present, we can discuss her case another time," he said hastily. "What does your own business relate to?"

"No less important an event than my marriage, sir."

"Your marriage!" repeated his father, in utter surprise, "your marriage, Mortimer!"

"Yes, indeed sir, and I flatter myself, one you will entirely approve—Miss Heron is calculated, in every way, to make me happy, and to gratify you in the quality of a daughter-in-law."

"The lady, whose name you mention, is the sister I presume of your friend Sir George," said the Baron, coldly.

Mortimer merely bent his head, in answer to this partial interrogatory; and proceeded to give an undisguised exposition of his sentiments and prospects, during which Lord Fitz Eustace did not attempt to interrupt him, but

when he concluded, the former said, "And you expect my sanction to this match?"

"I hope you see no objection to it, sir?"

His father thought a moment, and then replied! "I would your matrimonial search had been somewhat more lofty, Mortimer, for I cannot say the daughter of a baronet is the partner I desire for my heir—Perhaps the family is ancient?"

"I know not my lord," answered the young lover, with a flushed cheek, "it is one of unquestionable respectability, and that is quite sufficient for me."

"I cannot say that is all I look for in your union, Mortimer. I have always expressed my wishes for you to seek a noble alliance."

"You have, my lord, though my sentiments, on this point, have never been similar to yours. But had I been so inclined, my sister's fate would have deterred me from separating my hand from my affections."

"True," returned his father, speaking slowly, at the same time walking to and fro, in evident uneasiness. "You have certainly cause to take warning from her, nevertheless, Mortimer, a wife is not so capable of acting erroneously, and the experiment in your case would not be so dangerous."

"Excuse me, my dear father, if I differ from you; I would not distress you, but I have had too sure a proof of the necessity of choosing a wife for the qualities of her mind, rather than those of less valuable possessions, ever to court rank or beauty for themselves only."

"You would instance Jane Vernon, I suppose, Mortimer," he rejoined, gloomily, "and perhaps you are right, though I cannot approve your choice at all." Seeing his son's look of alarm, he added, "However, be that as it may, I must have time to think over this affair, which has come upon me rather unexpectedly. You shall have my opinion in a few days."

"I will abide your own time, Sir, but I beg you to remember your single voice will make or mar our happiness, and that no other woman but Miss Heron shall ever call me husband."

Lord Fitz Eustace made no reply, but sat down to his writing-table, and Mortimer left him to dispatch some business with his bailiff, for whom he had sent.

There was a marked coldness in the manner of the baron, which alarmed our hero, for he felt assured, unless he could obtain his free consent, Beatrice never would think of giving him her hand; and his father's indomitable pride of rank made him tremble for the result

of his demand. To his sister he immediately imparted his hopes and anxiety, for in her he was sure of finding the kindest sympathy. To her he fondly descanted on the merits of her he loved, and derived no inconsiderable pleasure in making her as much acquainted with Beatrice's character as possible, by description; and many were the smiles elicited from Mrs. Hamilton, as he dwelt with rapture on her superior merits. Again, and again, he expressed his apprehensions of the obduracy of Lord Fitz Eustace, and demanded her opinion on the subject, for, as no farther notice was taken of his declaration by his father that day, he had ample time to torment both himself and her by his uneasiness. He would have repeated his application, but was deterred by Maria, who advised him to exert his patience still a little longer. "By urging his lordship for an immediate answer, Mortimer," she said, one day, as he was complaining of the length of time he had to wait, "you may irritate him, and consequently, provoke a harsh sentence. I cannot say I anticipate so much evil from his silence as you do, for I am sure he has suffered too much from the consequences of his former scheme, to oppose your views."

"Then why keep me in this torturing suspense, Maria? I cannot endure it, for I dare

not write again to my poor Beatrice, until I can communicate something of importance. She is aware of my safe arrival here, and I promised my next letter should contain my father's answer. Indeed, Maria, I think it is impossible for me to wait in this cruel uncertainty any longer. Five days have elapsed since I told him, and he looks so sternly at times at me that I am almost convinced he will refuse his consent. By Heavens! if he do, the Poles will gain a soldier—and he lose a son!"

"Dearest Mortimer," answered his sister, affectionately, "wait yet another day quietly, I am as anxious as yourself to see your mind set at rest, but I know how severe will be the struggle between the wish for your happiness and our father's desire for your more exalted marriage; as it was not many days before your arrival, that he was speaking to me of his expectations for you, and I can assure you," she added, smiling, "in his opinion, no hand is worthy your solicitation, unless it be accompanied by a coronet."

"I know it, I know it, Maria, and most sincerely do I grieve such is the case; but, I will do as you advise with respect to my father, though I must say it is very provoking, as I want to write to the castle."

CHAPTER XIII.

I have a father's heart: come, join your hands.
Still keep thy vows——— .

CHAPMAN.

DURING the time that Lord Fitz Eustace suffered to elapse, before he resumed the subject so anxiously looked for by his son, he mixed little with his family, and seemed much engaged with the improvements he was making on his extensive estates; and this hurt Mortimer the more, because he thought this insignificant employment had superseded the consideration of his claims. Having said he would abide his father's pleasure, he was unwilling to break his word, and had therefore more readily yielded to his sister's representations, but beyond that day he was resolved not to extend his silence.

Mrs. Hamilton had retired to the drawing-room that day after dinner, when her brother

hastily entered, and with a countenance beaming with delight, rapturously embraced her. "Thank you most kindly, dearest Maria," he said, "for my father's concession—he has told me how much the consent, which he has just accorded to my marriage, is owing to your entreaties. You have conferred an incalculable benefit upon me, for I am sure I should never have induced him to concede the point without your generous interposition—I cannot express my gratitude."

"Nay, Mortimer, you rate my service far higher than it deserves. I flatter myself he would have yielded even without my solicitation, though I suppose I did influence him somewhat in your favour, which, believe me, gratified me not a little. But I was not sure I had succeeded in my object to my entire satisfaction, for my father made me no promise."

"I will tell you all about our conversation then, Maria," said the delighted brother, placing himself beside her on the sofa. "I left his lordship asleep over the fire, therefore, we shall not be interrupted yet. He began by asking me several questions with regard to the Heron family, which I answered most readily, you may be sure, since I was very happy to hear him revert to the business, and

after he had listened to what I had to re-urge, I fancied very coldly, he said, 'Mortimer, you may have been surprised at my delaying so long to give you any answer about your marriage, but you know how solicitous I have ever been for your advantage, and I was unable to make up my mind to speak to you again, because my wishes and yours I knew to be quite at variance.' I began to be quite alarmed, Maria, at so solemn a tone, and attempted to answer, but he prevented me by going on to say, that he had at last determined to refuse on the score of inequality of station. Upon this I rose hastily, and doubtless I looked both hurt and angry. I am sure I felt so—"

"Well!" said Mrs. Hamilton, "what did you say?"

"Simply, nothing, Maria," for I was confounded—another minute would have found his lordship alone, as I was rushing from the room, half wild with disappointment, when my father's hand laid on my arm, with more affectionate kindness than I think I ever experienced before, stopped me. He told me with a smile to hear all he had to say, and not to be so hasty. Though much irritated, I strove to be calm, and his looks encouraged me to hope for a better conclusion to his speech, therefore

I paused, and when also he mentioned your interest in my behalf I was almost breathless with anxiety. But after a little circumlocution, my kind sister, he informed me that, owing entirely to your arguments and expostulations, he had revoked his resolution, and that he would, for the sake of your happiness and my society—mind that, Maria, my society—agree to my proposal. Oh! how relieved I felt, how thankful to you for standing up for me, though I had rather you had not repeated my declaration of leaving the country, if my views were thwarted."

"Perhaps, dear Mortimer, a selfish feeling induced me to take advantage of those unguarded words, for I could not bear to part with you just now."

"Whatever the motive, I am sure it was a kind one, Maria, and as such esteem it. My father then spoke a little of my future plans, but appeared very thoughtful; so, as soon as I had declared my grateful sense of his concession, I hastened to thank you, and make you a participator in my joy. How I wish it were not too late to write to Beatrice to day! Dear girl, how happy she will be."

"Never mind, Mortimer, you will have more time for all you have to tell her. Did my

father appear quite reconciled to the match?"

"I fear not quite, though I am convinced, if he were to see Beatrice, all his lingering objections would be dissipated."

Mrs. Hamilton smiled, as she said, "You would not be a fond lover, Mortimer, if you did not think so: however, from what you have told me of her, I must agree with you, and doubtless all will now go on according to your most sanguine wishes."

"But if you go to the Continent so soon, Maria, I shall be deprived of the satisfaction of your and my father's presence at my wedding. He still seems resolute to go."

"Do not vex yourself on that account, my dear brother, should my father really insist upon my changing the scene, I will go over to Merton Hall, and so keep him near you at present. For myself," and as she spoke, her eyes filled with tears, "I am no fit attendant for such a festival, though my most fervent wishes for your happiness, you well know, will be yours."

Delmar pressed her hand, but perceiving that the subject was one which recalled her own unhappy union to her mind, he turned the conversation into another channel. By the following post, he informed Beatrice of the

successful issue of his journey, promising also, as soon as he could leave Ireland with propriety, he would return to the North. During his absence he had heard constantly both from her and Ellen, and from their letters he learnt the passing occurrences in Claybrook and its vicinity. The communications of each breathed the greatest affection for him, though the pleasure Mortimer derived from their receipt was alloyed by the accounts they frequently gave of Ellen's failing strength. The gentle Beatrice informed him that she observed a gradual change for the worse to take place in the poor invalid from the date of his departure, and she was sure Ellen was as alive to it as those around her, though, for Mr. Vernon's sake, she still combatted her depression and increasing illness in his presence. Ellen's letters also to Mortimer were couched in a way to ease his mind, though, at times, the unsteadiness of the characters, and an unguarded expression convinced him she was far more indisposed than she represented herself to be. Sometimes, when she declared her temporary improvement, and wrote in a cheerful manner, Mortimer was tempted to think Beatrice's fears had magnified the danger, but, at other moments, he fancied the contrary was the case. Thus every letter

had tormented, at the same time it consoled and gratified, him. He heard also that Lady Dinely and her husband had returned home shortly after he left the castle, where they still remained; but, great uneasiness was entertained for them by the family, as they heard from various quarters of the disorder of Sir Harry's affairs. Certain it was that his estate in the country was on sale, and Lady Dinely had spoken even during her visit of a plan of going abroad. "These things," wrote the baronet, "make us fancy all is not as it should be, and, added to Mary's confession to my mother, of her being far from happy with Dinely, grieves us much. She owned her child is her sole blessing from her union."

This child, Mortimer recollected to have heard his friend say, Lady Heron had wished should accompany its parents on their visit, but was disappointed in consequence of Sir Harry's refusing to travel with so troublesome a companion, it being scarcely nine months' old. Such were the details Delmar had received up to the period of his obtaining his father's somewhat unwilling assent to his marriage; details which had given him pain, although he was quite prepared for them. Ellen's state he felt to be almost hopeless,

though the accounts of her did not alarm him sufficiently, at present, to make him change his intention of staying a month in Ireland.

Each succeeding letter, however, from the time of his joyful dispatch to Beatrice, conveyed more fearful intelligence; and while Mortimer contributed in the highest degree to the gradually renovating spirits of Mrs. Hamilton, and, with Lord Fitz Eustace, arranged his future plans, he was distressed by hearing of the rapid decline of the unfortunate Ellen. The secret of her danger could no longer be concealed from Mr. Vernon, and the old man had almost sunk under the blow. The consolations of the Herons, and even those of the invalid herself, were ineffectual to calm his grief, and Delmar's fair correspondent described the cottage as being the scene of much distress. From various motives, he had refrained from communicating his great anxiety respecting her to his father, after the first moment of his arrival, for he was aware the subject was no pleasant one to that noble personage; but, in the present crisis he deemed it advisable to declare the truth, as he could no longer restrain his impatience to return to Heron Castle, from which he had now been absent verging on ten weeks.

Mrs. Hamilton, according to her promise, had already prevailed upon her father to renounce his intention of going to France for the present, in favour of a visit to England, where she proposed they should remain until Mortimer's marriage, which all his friends united in wishing should take place at Sir George Heron's estate in Hertfordshire. This, having previously determined, Mortimer lost no time in informing Lord Fitz-Eustace of the urgency for his departure earlier than he had originally intended; which plan, as he had feared, met with considerable opposition, his father having resolved in his own mind to retain his son until everything was completed for his own journey.

The fact was that the baron had been infinitely more affected by the recent events than those around him had any idea of, he felt that retribution had overtaken him by wounding him where he was most vulnerable. Remorse also, in his treatment of Mr. Vernon, agitated him, which was not slightly aggravated by the entire rejection of his bounty by the injured Ellen, while he saw his son, before whom he felt humiliated, cordially received and regarded as a friend at the cottage. By prevailing on Mortimer to prolong his absence, he hoped to

bring about the marriage, which, of itself, was a source of vexation to him, without Mortimer's return to Heron Castle, and thus loosen the interest which drew him to that quarter.

Two or three days were thus consumed, before our hero could succeed in reconciling his lordship to his embarkation, and when he had obtained an unwilling acquiescence, contrary winds prevented the vessel in which he had taken his passage from sailing. This delay was peculiarly destressing, when at the end of a week from the receipt of the letter, which had caused his uneasiness, another arrived, containing still more disastrous information. He was on the point of sailing, when it reached him from Sir George Heron, stating that Mr. Vernon had been seized with apoplexy, without any previous increase of indisposition, which had terminated his life in a few hours after. "If possible, my dear Delmar," urged the baronet, "come to us directly, as Ellen feels the shock dreadfully, and my mother and Beatrice fear she cannot last long."

Had Mortimer not already been determined in his intentions, this would have sufficed to consolidate them; scarcely anything now could have stopped him, therefore, putting the letter silently into his father's hand, he watched

his countenance narrowly during the perusal. He knew all idea of his presence not being requisite, as the baron had argued, must now be removed, and his object was to procure an unqualified consent to his journey.

Lord Fitz Eustace, having in a moment gathered the import of the hasty lines, turned to his son, saying with an abruptness totally unexpected by the latter, "Mortimer, you look for my sympathy perhaps, but I do not feel any, since the circumstance which pains you will be the means of enabling me to make my peace with myself—I will now see Ellen."

"You! my lord?" enquired Mortimer, in no small astonishment.

"Yes," rejoined he, firmly. "I have earnesly wished to visit Claybrook sometime, but did not know how to accomplish it while the old man lived."

"But you will not leave my sister here, my lord?"

"Certainly not, but I think she will readily agree to accompany me to Merton Hall, where she can remain while I follow you to the North. I am resolved to set off as soon as every thing can be arranged, for your friend seems to anticipate immediate danger; but do not think I will detain you, Mortimer, as your presence

seems of so much consequence. Had I behaved through life as I ought to have done, I should not now be thus punished." As he spoke, his countenance exhibited much concern, but he prevented an immediate reply from Delmar, by adding hastily, "by taking this journey, I shall be introduced to your future wife, which is an additional reason for my taking it."

Mortimer would rather Beatrice and his father should have met any where but at Heron Castle, or its neighbourhood, but he found argument useless; indeed, he did not like to oppose the plan much, on account of the awkwardness of the subject, and, consequently, it was soon settled that Mrs. Hamilton and the Baron should proceed in a few days to London, whence they were to dispatch intelligence to Mortimer respecting their farther movements.

CHAPTER XIV.

She faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender—kind,
And grieved for those she left behind—
And not a word of murmur—not
A groan o'er her untimely lot.

BYRON.

OUR hero landed at Holyhead, after a favourable passage, and rapidly posted across the country, in the direction of Claybrook. Various reasons led him first to the castle, among which, his desire to see his beloved Beatrice was undoubtedly the strongest, though, he also was influenced by his fear of alarming Ellen by his sudden arrival, as well as by his incertitude as to her state.

It was yet early when he reached the end of his journey, and on alighting, he was informed by the servants, that Sir George was out riding,

while the ladies had not yet returned from Mrs. Greville's. By a few farther enquiries, he learnt that Ellen had been removed, immediately on Mr. Vernon's death, to that lady's residence, which was not more than two miles' distant from the castle; the carriage had, however, gone to bring them home, and they were momentarily expected. This being the case, Delmar resolved to await their arrival patiently; and, entering the drawing room, for some time paced the floor, or sauntered from window to window, occasionally whistling a melancholy or a lively strain, as his thoughts wandered from Ellen to Beatrice. The room being situated on the opposite side of the house from that of the drive, he was not aware of the approach of the carriage until Beatrice herself opened the door, and, with delight beaming on her countenance, gave him that hurried, yet tender, reception, which told him at once how fondly he was welcome. "How truly happy I am to find you here, Mortimer," she said, "the duty you commissioned me to discharge was becoming almost too responsible."

"Yes, indeed, our poor young friend is in a most anxious state," said Lady Heron, "and although we have done our best for her with pleasure, our trust is willingly restored to you,

for we are aware how much more grateful your kind attentions are to her."

"I feel myself under the greatest obligations both to you and Beatrice, my dear Lady Heron," replied Delmar, "for your fulfilment of my office during my absence, a kindness I can only repay by my future conduct, and indeed—"

"Well, well, dear Mortimer," said Beatrice, smiling, "I am sure my mother will excuse the expression of your obligation, if such you call it, though, for my part I can say, you rather conferred one by making me of use to you; therefore let me tell you about our dear invalid."

"Beatrice says rightly, Mortimer," answered Lady Heron, "we have all felt as much, or more, gratification in our duties than is sufficient to cancel your feeling of gratitude, consequently all that is settled—But where is George, have you not seen him?"

"No, I believe he is not come home yet."

Sir George was not long, however, before he joined the party, and the evening was devoted to social converse, during which, each recounted in detail the events which had occurred. Beatrice dwelt with admiration on the calm resignation and religious hope of their patient, but described her anxiety to see Mortimer

again as being her only wish. Mrs. Greville's almost maternal affection was declared to be unbounded; and, in short, our hero was convinced, by what he heard, that every earthly comfort in the power of friends to confer was at her command. He related, in turn, his father's strange and sudden intention, which was immediately met by the Baronet with the offer of welcome at the castle, should Lord Fitz Eustace intend staying in the vicinity.

By the precautionary advice of Lady Heron, herself and Beatrice preceded Mortimer, some time, on the ensuing morning, at Mrs. Greville's, in order to prepare Ellen for the first interview with him; and, although he arrived in less than an hour after them, she was exhausted by the worry of expectation. Too weak now to stand or walk, she was carried from her bed into the adjoining chamber, where she occupied a couch, having more the appearance of death than an animate body. Every originally perfect feature presented a painful sharpness, her once rounded form was shrunk to a skeleton; and the hands so plump, so delicate, some few short months before, were now literally nothing but bone.

Beatrice only sat beside her as Mortimer entered, and it was beautiful to see with what

confidence, with what pleasure, the former saw the being against whom her jealous fears had formerly been raised fondly pressed in the arms of her lover. After having conversed some time on the melancholy event which had re-called Mortimer, from which, far from appearing to wish to divert her thoughts, Ellen turned, with a sad pleasure, she said, as she looked tenderly in his face, "Oh! how thankful I am for the blessing of your return; I can now follow my dear Mr. Vernon with joy, since you, my only acknowledged relation, will close my eyes."

"Dearest Ellen," answered Mortimer, "call me not your only relation; in a day or two I believe—I hope, you will be able to call my father, yours also."

"Father!—my father—what do you mean, Mortimer?" she enquired, eagerly, while the bright hectic glowed on her cheek.

"I mean, Ellen, that Lord Fitz Eustace intends to pay a visit at the castle, shortly, and if you be well enough, I hope you will see him."

"Me see him, Mortimer!" she repeated, shuddering slightly, "Oh no! not now, I cannot. Both for his and my own sake, it must not be—I have no kind protector now, to spare

me this useless pang, so do not take advantage of my forlorn situation. You must feel it is much the wisest way for him, his family and myself, that the curtain of death should be permitted quietly to fall without re-awakening those feelings which have embittered his life and destroyed mine."

"Unless such an interview would gratify you, Ellen, doubtless, it shall be avoided. I considered it would be a source of comfort to you."

"The only comforts I desire now, Mortimer, are derived from you and Beatrice. A few days, and I shall burthen my kind friends no longer—that a tear may not drop for my early fate, I will not do them the injustice to believe; but we shall soon meet again—never more to part." She extended a hand to each of her companions, and her eyes filled with tears, when she saw how deeply both were affected; and she continued, "Now leave me, my kind friends, I am greatly fatigued."

"You have exerted yourself too much," said Beatrice, as she rose to obey the request, "I must not allow Mortimer to stay so long to-morrow. I am sure Mrs. Greville will say you are very, very tired."

"I shall see you again in an hour or two,

Mortimer?" said the invalid, enquiringly, as he pressed her hand.

"If you wish it, Ellen, though perhaps I had etter not come until to-morrow."

"Ah! you must agree with dear Beatrice, I suppose you think—still I hope you will come in the evening, I am always better then, and I shall be very jealous of every moment you pass away from me now."

Delmar readily promised to do as she desired, in order to terminate the present visit, for it was apparent to him and Beatrice, by Ellen's countenance, that she was much distressed and exhausted. The former was silent and abstracted the remainder of the day, for he saw with pain the frightful change which had taken place in the appearance of the interesting sufferer; and he felt that, as she said, a very short period would terminate her trials. Beatrice participated in his sentiments, for, independent of the sympathy which is said ever to exist between hearts that love, she had become deeply interested in the invalid, whose tantalizing illness she had now watched for so many weeks. Delmar visited Mrs. Greville's again that day, but Ellen was much too unwell to be disturbed, and she had been persuaded by her attendants to postpone his

visit until the morrow. During the following weekhe continued his constant attendance, and, with Lady Heron and Beatrice, he sought, by the greatest kindness, to alleviate the suffering of the interesting victim of heartless cruelty.

Quickly she sunk, for the death of her beloved Mr. Vernon appeared to have completely destroyed the little strength, or wish, she had left to struggle against disease; she resigned herself to her approaching fate, and cheerfully spoke of the coming change. The day on which Mortimer first saw her after his return was the last she left her room, though, up to the period of her dissolution, she continued to exchange the wearisomeness of her bed for that of the couch, where, each day, she received her kind friends, who were frequently deeply affected by her heart-rending allusions to her sorrows, or her grateful acknowledgements for their care. As often as she could bear it, Mortimer, or Beatrice, read such parts of Scripture as she selected, whereupon her comments edified and convinced her companions that she was fully prepared to quit a world of sin, for an everlasting resting-place. Her child, which she had kept constantly with her at first, was now unable to stay in the room many minutes at a time, for

her weakness; and its striking likeness to its unhappy father induced Mortimer to order it not to be brought into her chamber unnecessarily, since it affected her deeply, for the tenderness of friendship was ever on the watch to avert her from sorrow. The common interest Ellen's illness had, for some time, created in the mind of each, and the constancy of their attendance at the side of her couch, had drawn the knot of love still closer between Mortimer and Beatrice. They lived but for each other, though the care of their mutual friend had, for the moment, banished all thought of their future happiness. The most affectionate intimacy and unbounded confidence subsisted between them; and as, day after day, they sought the mourner to unite in the work of smoothing the path of premature decay, and witnessed the piety and holy hope of their dying friend, their warm hearts unconsciously glowed with feelings of that deep affection which, unseen, becomes a part of self, and which nothing can destroy save the loss of life in one, or both! A fabric based on the rock of esteem! Happy would it be for thousands, if their temple of happiness could boast so firm a foundation! Rank, wealth, or beauty, too often supersede humble merit in the search of

felicity, and its victims find, to their cost, that the dazzling bauble is far less valuable than they had anticipated!

One afternoon that the lovers were returning from Mrs. Greville's, an unusually long silence prevailed; and Mortimer, on detecting it, said, as he pressed the hand of his companion, which rested on his arm, "Why so sad, dearest? I fear our poor Ellen's harassing situation preys upon your spirits. I shall not let you go with me again, for a smile on those dear lips is a pleasure I cannot forego."

"Nay, Mortimer, do not think I am made low by assisting you in your work of love. The conviction of having imparted comfort to the bruised spirit conveys a pleasing, although a melancholy, feeling, for which I must crave indulgence, since I am certain you are imbued with a similar sentiment. Dear Ellen's conversation is so beautiful that I am sure we ought to feel the contentment she expresses at the approach of her dissolution, which I fear is not far off."

"I believe you are right, Beatrice, and I almost think my father's journey will be an useless one, independent of her partial refusal to see him, should she be able."

"Do you really think his Lordship will accept my brother's invitation?"

"Yes, indeed; when I left him he was fully determined to see Ellen, and, doubtless, the additional incitement of coming to the castle will hasten his arrival."

"Perhaps, Mortimer, you may fancy me unkind, but I cannot help entertaining considerable alarm at the idea of meeting him. I fear he will not like me as a daughter-in-law. From all, I hear your sister so highly spoken of, that, judging from her example, he may think me unworthy of his son."

"These are idle fancies, my own love," returned Mortimer, fondly, "my father can appreciate worth; and, though he has, unfortunately, appeared to you in an unfavourable light, I trust, for my sake, you will overcome any unpleasant recollections, and regard him without prejudice. He will not, cannot, be dissatisfied."

"I hope, Mortimer, you do not think me capable of feeling ill-disposed towards any member of your family? I shall see Lord Fitz Eustace only as your father, and as such he must be honoured by me."

"Those words are like yourself, dearest

Beatrice, ever kind, and generous. Believe me, you will find him far more estimable than some circumstances may have led you to conceive; and, as to Maria, I need only say that you will soon discover in her every noble quality that a brother may be proud of in a beloved sister. Indeed I flatter myself that you will be exactly suited to each other, and quickly become attached, for Maria already knows you by reputation, and is disposed to love you warmly."

"Ah, Mortimer, I fear you have been speaking of me in much higher terms than I deserve, but I will do my best to repay her kindness."

"I know that, Beatrice, and am, consequently, under no apprehensions for the result. All you do is sure to please others, as well as myself."

CHAPTER XV.

Could tears retard the tyrant in his course;
Could sighs avert his dart's relentless force;
Could youth and virtue claim a short delay,
Or beauty charm the spectre from his prey—
Thou still hadst lived.

BYRON.

In due time Lord Fitz Eustace announced his arrival with his daughter at Mr. Hamilton's, whence he intended immediately to start for the north, and thus follow his letter within a few hours.

On the day Mortimer received this information, he found Ellen much enfeebled, too ill indeed to talk, but still desirous that he and Beatrice should remain with her. They complied, and, after sitting beside her a little while she appeared to doze, and they continued motionless, fearing, by the slightest sound, to arouse her. Sorrowfully did Mortimer contemplate her wasted form, as he listened to her

irregular breathing. The exquisitely beautiful line of feature still marked her countenance, but in nothing else was she like the being he had so ardently admired; and a crowd of unavailing regrets occupied his mind, as he sat with his arm resting on a table beside him, his hand shading his eyes, into which the tears started, as he almost fancied death had even now made her his own, so much did she look changed. Beatrice laid her hand gently on his, in token of her participation in his feelings, which he fondly pressed, but did not speak, and his thoughts were almost instantly dispelled by Ellen's soft smile, as she awoke and saw them still with her.

"How good you are," she said, "to watch over me. I am better now, and can talk a little, so I am very glad to find you still here. When I was so ill last night, Mortimer, I regretted I had not told you yesterday that, if you wish it, I will see Lord Fitz Eustace. Is he come yet?"

"No, dearest Ellen, but I expect every hour to hear of his arrival. Do you think you can bear the meeting?"

"I would confer all the comfort and pleasure I can, Mortimer, during the moment I yet stay with you. Perhaps, too, I should

like to see my father, since he is yours also."

"You shall be gratified, Ellen, I will bring him here myself."

"Let it then be soon, very soon, for I feel I have not many hours to live—to-morrow even may be dark to me—What, Beatrice, do you weep for me? Nay, love, I need not these tears—I am going to be happy."

"Do not talk so, Ellen," said Beatrice, bending over her, "you pain us all, and distress yourself."

"I did not intend to grieve you, dear Beatrice, but you know, as well as I do, my sand is nearly spent—Ah! Mortimer, do not draw down that blind."

"But the sun shines so strongly upon the room, I thought it would disturb you, Ellen."

"Ah! no, perhaps I may not see it again—still let me look at its bright light." She then turned to Mrs. Greville, and asked her to fetch her child, which she had not seen that day. When it was brought, she said, "Give her to me—I know she is too heavy for me to hold long, but, for the last time, I must kiss her dear little face. Ah! my poor child! I am going to leave you—but not totally unprotected, I am sure, though the good friend who had promised

to watch over you, as he did over your unfortunate mother—is gone before her—May your fate be more happy than mine! It cannot easily be worse—Dear Mrs. Greville, you answered for this innocent at the font—will you?—but I cannot ask it, I have received so many favours."

"My dearest friend," answered the good lady, taking the infant in her arms. "I will promise what you wish, though you will not ask it. Your babe shall eat of my bread, and drink of my cup, as long as she requires it. Surely, Ellen, you did not doubt my care in this respect?"

"Never, but I know that more than one in this room might wish to perform this act of charity, and I would not have my child looked upon with scorn. Ah! Mortimer, I see you understand me—I am convinced you would take the responsibility on yourself, for my sake, but I have too much regard for you to harbour the wish—no uneasiness, no avoidable stain, shall result to you from my connection—nevertheless, I gratefully thank you."

"But Mrs. Greville may want a coadjutor, Ellen, may I not hold that situation?"

"No, my dear, dear Mortimer, let all your care cease when I am in the grave—I will not

say Forget me, for that would be impossible after your noble conduct, and to a mind like yours—but forget I leave a pledge of misplaced affection, and let your thoughts of me tend to enhance the happiness you deserve—rest satisfied that, through you, and your good friends, my last days have been comforted—Your individual affection has been to me what a beautiful rainbow is to the world, after a frightful thunder storm. It re-assures and comforts the face of nature, the bright sun again breaks out, and night closes, like my existence, with a chastened smile of gratitude and love for the mercies of heaven. I trust I have duly felt the blessings of God, and acknowledged them, but so frail are we that our best endeavours are often vain!—Beatrice, give me your hand, I have one request to make you; Mortimer, too must reply to it." Both had knelt down beside her, and, locking their hands in hers, she continued, "I love you both—I know you love each other, and I own I have felt a foolish wish to live to see these dear hands united—My heavenly Father, however, wills it otherwise, and I submit to his all-wise dispensations! But let me entreat that my death may not retard your marriage beyond one month from this—Will you promise, my dear

brother, my kind Beatrice?—I would not have you grieve for me—I shall be happy then—May God bless you!" Her voice faltered with her emotion, and her auditors could only press her hand in silence, for the tears streamed down Beatrice's cheeks, while more than one large drop fell from Delmar's eyes, on the thin hand of the sufferer, as he imprinted a long kiss upon it.

"If that assurance will give you any satisfaction, dearest," he said, after a momentary pause, "I will say, for myself, your wish shall be remembered; and, I know, Beatrice will confirm it, though it is not likely, under any circumstances, that the event you mention should take place so early."

Beatrice only bent her head in reply, but the movement was understood. "I thank you both, and feel quite satisfied," returned the invalid with a faint smile, "my work is completed, and I have only to wait my summons from on high, which I feel is close at hand—Pray for me, my dear friends, and, believe me, my last supplications shall be for you." She sunk back, as she pronounced these words, overpowered by the exertion of so long a conversation, during which, her cough had frequently greatly inconvenienced her.

Mrs. Greville, who had retired with the infant as soon as she was able, in order to leave her dying friend more at liberty during the interview with Mortimer, was hastily recalled, and to her care Ellen was consigned, while the lovers, after a little delay to ascertain her partial recovery, retraced the road to the castle.

Our hero was immediately apprised on reaching home that Lord Fitz Eustace had arrived about half an hour previously, and he consequently hastened to meet his father; while Beatrice, anxious to avoid so sudden an introduction to a person for whom she entertained no small portion of fear, slipped away to her room. He found his lordship with Sir George and Lady Heron, whose reception, Mortimer instantly perceived, had highly gratified him, for he saluted his son with more than ordinary suavity; and, for some time, the conversation flowed on with that ease which is so natural to those accustomed to mix in good society. The Baron was a person whose manners denoted the finished gentleman, and the Herons were equally pleased with the first impression made by their visiter. No reference was made to the object of his journey, for Mortimer avoided even mentioning the customary bulletin of Ellen's state that afternoon, being desirous

not to dispel the pleasing disposition of his father, before he saw Beatrice, by awakening so painful a reflection.

A few minutes before the bell sounded for dinner, Miss Heron made her appearance, and, on being presented to her future father-in-law, was completely re-assured by his kindness. "You must permit me, my dear Miss Heron, to enjoy the privilege of the new duty which my son intends to impose upon me," he said, as he took her hand, and just touched her flushed cheek with his lips. "I know Mortimer will not take it ill that I, for once, taste a pleasure he will shortly make his own." Beatrice looked timidly at her lover, but the smile of satisfaction which played round his mouth called one into her own countenance, and in a moment the dreaded awkwardness of the meeting was over. She found Lord Fitz Eustace less haughty than she had expected, and therefore quickly recovered her composure; though Mortimer observed that she could not entirely shake off the gloom which the situation of Ellen had occasioned.

Before returning to the drawing-room after dinner, his father drew Mortimer aside, and enquired, with apparent anxiety, after the invalid, whom he desired should be informed of

his wish to see her in the morning. To this however, the latter objected, and briefly explained the uncertainty of her existence for a day. The Baron was evidently much surprised, as well as chagrined, by so unexpected a disclosure, and became even more urgent, in consequence, to avoid delay. At length it was proposed by Lady Heron, to whom Mortimer referred the question, that a servant should be immediately dispatched to the village, to apprise Mrs. Greville of Lord Fitz Eustace's being at the castle, requesting her, at the same time, to disclose that fact to Ellen, according as she was able to bear it." This was unanimously agreed to, and in the course of an hour the messenger returned, with a note from Ellen's kind friend, written in considerable agitation, to say that she would comply as soon as possible with the desire expressed by Delmar, but at present such a communication was useless, as her dear young friend had been much worse the previous hour or two, so ill, indeed, that she had not been able to attend to anything. She concluded by entreating Mortimer to come early on the following morning, as both herself and Mr. Brownlow apprehended that Ellen had not many hours to live. Prepared as Mortimer was for this intelligence, he was staggered by its official announcement

for such he conceived the doctor's opinion to be. He felt for his father, who had so recently been made aware of her danger, and who, if he really were anxious to have the satisfaction of seeing her, he feared might meet with a disappointment; for, if death were so near, he foresaw the probability that she might ere their visit be no more. In the state Ellen was, however, it was unavailing to attempt an immediate adjournment to the village, for they could not be admitted to see her; and to witness her sad sufferings would only inflict pangs and impotent regret, which he felt certain were already busy in the mind of Lord Fitz Eustace, or the proud noble would never have so far allowed his error as to conceive the idea of partially repairing it.

These thoughts passed quickly through Mortimer's mind, as he held the billet in his hand an instant, before he spoke. The change which was visible in his countenance, announced to his companions that something in the note disturbed him, and each, as their fears dictated, augured its contents. Lord Fitz Eustace attributed it to a positive refusal on Ellen's part to admit him, while the Herons approached nearer the truth, in supposing increased illness was the cause. Their suspense did not last long, for, on handing the little

epistle to his father, he turned to his expecting friends and told them its contents. All were distressed, but concurred in his determination of waiting the next day before intruding upon Mrs. Greville again, since no advantage could be gained by any precipitate measure; and, after canvassing the sorrowful subject a short time, the party separated early, each feeling unequal to sustain a cheerfulness they did not feel.

Beatrice's urgent wish, to accompany her lover in the morning to Mrs. Greville's, he strongly opposed, for he knew how deeply she would be affected; and, after some hesitation, she consented to give up the satisfaction of seeing her friend again, unless she should be demanded by the sufferer. "In that case, Mortimer," she said, as he was about to precede Lord Fitz Eustace by half an hour, in order to prepare for his reception, "in that case, I depend upon your sending to me. Do not hesitate—I will not allow myself to be overcome."

"Rely upon me, dearest," replied Delmar, "I well know your firmness, and deeply thank you for all you have already shewn." Having received Beatrice's compliance with his wish, he lost no time in mounting his horse, which soon bore him on his way.

CHAPTER XVI.

Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the tyrant's power;
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first, last look by death reveal'd.

BYRON.

How lov'd, how honour'd once, avails thee not,
To whom related, or by whom begot;
A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be!

POPE.

As our hero approached Mrs. Greville's, his eyes were fearfully raised to the windows, in expectation of seeing them closed. It was not pleasure, exactly, which pervaded his breast as he perceived his fears had overstepped the reality, for he was convinced that, for Ellen's own sake, it would have been happy if life had ceased; neither was it sorrow, for he wished once more to see the being he had so fondly loved, before animation had fled for ever!

But it was a feeling between the two, which knew what was best, and yet could not entirely divest itself of the wish to retain the object of its affection. He hoped his father's wish might yet be gratified, and consequently he hastened to assure himself of that probability.

Mrs. Greville told him that, in the course of the night, Ellen had been extremely restless, and had mentioned his name, as also that of her little girl; but now for some time she had slept, or appeared to sleep; and at intervals was so perfectly quiescent that her attendants almost fancied her sorrows were at an end. Lord Fitz Eustace's coming was therefore unnecessary and useless; nevertheless, Mortimer could not now prevent it, and, after having stood awhile beside the dying woman, who took no notice of his presence, he returned towards the castle, with the intention of advising his father to relinquish his purpose. This he could not accomplish, for his lordship was perfectly resolute, and the father and son entered the house together. The baron was strongly, though silently, affected on being introduced, according to his desire, into Ellen's chamber; the sight of the being who recalled so many subjects of remorse and humiliation seemed to shake his very soul, but he struggled

for composure, and, for sometime, he and Mortimer anxiously waited in expectation of a lucid interval, in vain.

At length, her eyes were unclosed, and, breathing heavily, she looked earnestly upon her visiters.

"My father, Ellen," said Mortimer, in a low tone, "your father is come to you."

Lord Fitz Eustace took her cold hand, and, with a look of deep concern, repeated, "Your contrite father, Ellen:" her glassy eye instantly lighted up, and a gentle smile brightened her features, as her fingers, already rigid with the near approach of death, strove to return the pressure. Her pale lips moved in the attempt to express her feelings, but articulation failed her; and, after gazing earnestly on the parent she now saw for the first and last time, she fixed her eyes upon her beloved Mortimer, and then raised them to Heaven as if in the act of prayer. Again she made an ineffectual effort to speak, smiled faintly as her lids closed, and then, with a sigh so soft that those nearest could scarcely hear it, she resigned her spirit into the hands of Him who gave it.

It was not until the expiration of a short time, that her friends could believe that she had departed, for she looked so calm, so happy,

that it appeared as if she had merely sunk into a refreshing sleep. Mortimer listened in breathless eagerness for a repetition of that sigh, but in vain—it came not—all was still!

"It once was Ellen that he looked upon," but now she had passed away for ever!

Without a word, the young man turned, and drew his apparently unconscious father from the bed of death. The events of the following week require no detail, they were such as necessarily succeed the circumstance above narrated, and with which all are too intimately acquainted not to desire silence on that head.

The now beatified Ellen was wept and lamented as a friend, and as the victim of crime; but all who loved her felt that it was selfish to deplore her loss, for, being fully prepared to meet her Maker, she was most likely in the enjoyment of that happiness which she had not found upon earth!

Lord Fitz Eustace, with Mortimer, and Sir George Heron, followed her remains to her final resting-place in the church-yard of Claybrook, where the tears and the regrets of the affectionate villagers were called forth, in like manner as their blessings had been two short years before, when, arrayed in all the loveliness of youth and beauty, she had sold herself to

treachery. Many an aged peasant, stumbling on the borders of eternity, who had looked forward to his last moments being eased by her kind attention, mourned over her untimely fate, while the youthful deplored her as the model of their lives, and all felt bereaved of a common friend.

The old and faithful Margaret, who had fostered the childhood of her beloved young mistress, and participated in the joys and sorrows of her short life, perhaps felt the blow of her death more keenly than any one; for, having lived so long in Mr. Vernon's family, every tie had been forgotten, and she felt as if she had lost her only friend—her only attraction upon earth! It is true, Ellen's child was a call upon her shattered love, and, for a time, she watched over it with a mother's care, but she never again held up her head, and, ere long, she was laid near the being she loved even unto death!

Almost all the inhabitants of the hamlet were present at the solemn ceremony which was to close the earthly scene of the young, and unhappy Ellen; for each desired to see the last of their kind benefactress; and the respectful silence, the deep drawn sigh, or suppressed sob, told how truly her memory was

cherished. Delmar saw that the village flower would long live in the hearts of those who, like herself, were simple-minded, and uncontaminated by a communion with the world.

Happy! thrice happy, she who leaves the lasting impression of her worth on the minds of the purer portion of the little society in which her course has run!

After the sad solemnity, Mortimer again repaired to Mrs. Greville's, to take his leave of her and her young charge, who was amply provided for by Hamilton's will; for, as he had declared, all his own property had been bequeathed to its ill-fated mother, in reversion to her child, and the will being found, upon inspection, perfectly orthodox, no difficulty was to be anticipated in her future support. That visit was his last, as, on the succeeding morning, he was to set off with his father for Merton Hall, whence, accompanied by Mrs. Hamilton, they were to proceed, at the end of a month, to join the Herons in Hertfordshire, where preparations were immediately to be made for his nuptials. Having thus fulfilled every duty incumbent upon him, he returned to the castle to devote the transitory period of his stay to his beloved Beatrice.

CHAPTER XVII.

O happy they! the happiest of their kind!
Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.
'Tis not the coarser tie of human laws,
Unnatural oft and foreign to the mind,
That binds their peace, but harmony itself,
Attuning all their passions into love:
Where friendship full exerts her softest power,
Perfect esteem, enliven'd by desire
Ineffable, and sympathy of soul.

THOMSON.

BEATRICE'S gentle, unaffected manners, sweetness of temper, and marked attention to himself, had made a complete convert of Lord Fitz Eustace, whose feelings, still smarting from the recent shock of wounded pride, were fortunately more accessible to sterling worth. He owned to himself that Mortimer had chosen well, though that opinion was still unacknowledged to those around him; and he now vainly wished Maria's feelings had

been similarly consulted. In short, remorse had been silently undermining the monument of his pride many weeks, and the reflections created by the past week's events had completed its overthrow; and Beatrice and Delmar felt that his behaviour proclaimed his prejudices against her, if such ever existed, were now no more, which was confirmed that evening, by his lordship's open avowal of satisfaction at the prospect of Beatrice's becoming a part of his family. The circumstance which called forth this declaration was a trifling chance, but how often do we not see the greatest results derived from the most insignificant occurrences!

The evening was one of great beauty, for the day had been warm, and the mild air of early May wafted a perfume from every adjacent field and garden; and, notwithstanding the sun had sunk below the horizon, a bright glow still remained on all around. Beatrice that day had not quitted the house, and Mortimer left the dining-room directly she and Lady Heron had retired, in hopes of persuading her to take a walk. A quarter of an hour passed, and, as he did not return, on Sir George being called away to speak to some person on agricultural business, Lord Fitz Eustace walked

out upon the terrace, whence the windows of Lady Heron's boudoir were visible. The terrace was partly shaded by trees on the side nearest the mansion, which prevented his being easily seen, and, as the baron walked slowly along between the spreading branches, he could perceive that a happy group was stationed at the open sash, apparently engaged in conversation. He stopped, and, himself unobserved for a few minutes, contemplated their happy countenances with inward satisfaction.

The tall, elegant Mortimer was partly sitting, partly leaning on the window sill, while his head was bent towards Beatrice, who was standing beside him. Her shoulder almost touched his, her hand placed upon his arm was half held in his; and, though Lord Fitz Eustace was not near enough to note their absolute looks, the light which fell upon their faces was sufficient to convince him that bright smiles reigned on each lip, that affection flashed in each eye, and that their conversation was of that tender stamp which is the consequence, the delight, of true love.

Lady Heron also seemed to participate in their pleasure, for she stood by her daughter with her face turned towards the lovers.

"And I have wished to forbid such happiness as those two young creatures are now partaking!" thought Lord Fitz Eustace. "I have been tempted by the desire of seeing my boy united to one of the highest in the land, to crush his warm and noble heart, for I believe his upright principles would have prevented his marrying against my will. Thank heaven! my children are dutiful, though I would I were able to trace their conduct to love, rather than to propriety. My poor Maria has already fallen a victim to her implicit obedience, and I will not add another name to the list of evils I have brought about. No! Mortimer shall have my unqualified approbation in this affair, for I must see my son, at least, happy."

The baron remained stationary until the party receded from the window, which they did almost immediately, when Sir George Heron joined him, saying, as he did so, "I find my mother and sister are not inclined to come out to-night, my lord, but, if you please, that need not prevent our taking advantage of the lovely weather."

Accordingly, they strolled for an hour through the shrubbery, but the young baronet found his companion thoughtful and taciturn,

and, consequently, was not sorry when their walk was concluded. On entering the drawing-room, they found Lady Heron presiding at the tea-table, while Mortimer and Beatrice were standing in the veranda. Lord Fitz Eustace stepped out also, but so earnest was their conversation that he was unnoticed, until, placing one hand on his son's shoulder, at the same time holding out the other to Beatrice, he said, " I am almost unwilling to interrupt the happiness you enjoy in each other's society, my dear children, by carrying Mortimer away to-morrow. Say, may I hope, Beatrice, that you will forgive me for being so unkind ?"

" Most willingly, my lord," replied she smiling, " indeed no apology or regret is due from you, since I am sure Mortimer feels the pain of a temporary separation cancelled by the pleasure of affording you any gratification."

" Doubtless your own sentiments are conveyed in that opinion ? " said he, in an interrogatory tone, " and I thank you for them."

" That I am sure they are, my dear father. Beatrice's ideas are far superior to mine in every thing, for where I might repine she always submits with cheerfulness, and endea-

vours to convert me; but I fear I am very much more selfish than herself."

"Oh! indeed, Mortimer, you do yourself injustice, you never think of your own happiness when that of another is concerned. Will not your lordship agree with me?"

"I will agree with you both, my dear Beatrice, in believing that each is worthy of the other, and that each is fondly loved. Ah! do not let me call that rebellious blush into your cheek, but let me say that it is my firm persuasion that, in conferring this hand on Mortimer, you will convey an almost equally precious gift on myself, for I feel well assured I shall gain a kind and affectionate daughter. Indeed, I am convinced Mortimer has chosen equally for his own, and for his friends', happiness."

Lord Fitz Eustace placed her hand in that of his son while he spoke, and Delmar said, "I cannot express my gratitude, my dear father, for this avowal; believe me, we are both sensible of its value, for you have removed the only cloud which overshadowed us, by your generous approval."

"My end is then answered, my son, I wished to contribute my mite towards your felicity. I have so long heard and seen nothing but the

grief I have occasioned, that it is quite a relief to find myself furnishing pleasure to any of those I love."

The eyes of Beatrice swam in tears, but the baron obviated any reply by re-entering the room, whither the happy lovers followed him, and the evening wore away in increased enjoyment.

The next morning Mortimer and his father left the scene of so much joy and sorrow; and, after a few weeks, accompanied by Mrs. Hamilton, reached Hertfordshire. The latter soon became an universal favourite at the hall, her disposition assimilated perfectly with that of Beatrice, and, during her visit, her health and spirits rapidly improved. The happiness of her brother was a balm to her wounded heart, and, in the two months which preceded his nuptials, cheerfulness was again restored to her mind.

That period was fully occupied by our hero in various necessary arrangements, sometimes in London, and sometimes in the more delightful society of her he loved, at the Hall. The day at length approached that he was to call Beatrice his own, and those few friends who were to be present at the ceremony arrived.

Among these were Sir Harry and Lady Dinely, then on the point of leaving the country, in consequence of their altered fortunes not allowing them longer to remain where the former was unable to curb his taste for the turf. His debts were still numerous, although the remains of his funded property, as well as his estate, had been sacrificed. The interest of his wife's fortune was all they had to depend upon, since, most fortunately, the principal had been settled on herself and children. The necessity of banishment from England, and his favourite pursuits, together with the numerous vexations and privations his extravagance had entailed on himself and family, visibly increased the moroseness of Sir Harry, and the unhappy Mary cast many an unavailing regret over the past. Though her high spirits had not forsaken her, her late troubles had not failed to make their impression on her sensitive mind, and her friends detected melancholy symptoms of lurking sorrow, at times in her manner. She deeply lamented her husband's obstinate determination of leaving her children (for they had now two) under the care of his mother, since they constituted her greatest pleasure. He had a great aversion to such

young companions, and, having always entertained a horror of a family, was constantly irritated when he saw them.

"If I could only persuade Sir Harry to take George," said Lady Dinely to her aunt, one day, as they were discussing the subject, "and leave baby with you, I think then I should be happy. But to give up both to his mother, who I really cannot bear, is too hard. Then, if we were going only to France, I would not care so much, but America is so very far—and he talks of staying there for years. Alas! my dearest aunt, how often I have thought of my behaviour to my kind cousin, since I acted so contrary to your advice. But it is useless to think about that now," she continued, with a forced laugh, "or to trouble you with my complaints. I must make the best of my bargain. Perhaps Harry will change again, when this cloud has blown over."

Though the young wife affected indifference on the anticipated departure of herself and husband, Lady Heron felt she was greatly chagrined at it; and, in consequence, taking advantage of a favourable opportunity, she expressed to Sir Harry her hope that he would gratify his wife, by permitting their eldest boy

to accompany them to the new world. After several attempts to refute her arguments, he yielded an unwilling assent, but his displeasure was perceptible by the uncourteous manner in which he announced this change of purpose to Mary. Her gratitude to her aunt, notwithstanding, was extreme, and the good Lady Heron flattered herself that, at least, she had softened Mary's cares, though she could not remove them; and she parted from her, a few days after, with less pain than she would have done had she known her niece was going to a far distant land without a single consolation.

On the appointed morning, the sixth of July, the enraptured Delmar received his blushing bride from Sir George Heron, who, with all the affection of a brother, and a sincere friend, bestowed the valuable gift of the hand of Beatrice upon one who, he was aware, had long possessed her love.

The young couple returned to the Hall for an hour, in order that Beatrice might change her dress; when, having taken leave of their beloved relatives, Mortimer almost lifted his sobbing wife into the carriage, and, hastily following her, waved his hand to his father

and Sir George, who stood upon the steps of the house, drew down the blinds, and set off at full gallop towards London.

"Well, George," said Lady Dinely (who, with the rest of the party, had watched the departure from the window), as her cousin re-entered, "they are gone in excellent style. I love a dash! By the bye, when do you intend to give us the pleasure of tasting your wedding cake? As Sir Harry means positively to embark next week, I fear there is no chance of my coming in for a share. However, I will drink your health, wherever I am, if you let me know when there is to be a young Lady Heron!"

"All in good time, Mary, I have no wish to dispossess my good mother of her seat at the head of my table, for I have never yet found a lady fit to supersede her, or worthy of being her daughter."

"That is as bad a compliment to our sex in general, George, as it may be gratifying to my aunt. The young ladies are greatly obliged to you."

"So they ought to be," returned the baronet, laughing; "for my indulging the hope of succeeding in meeting with her equal."

"I assure you, Lady Dinely," said Lady

Heron, "I shall be as anxious to resign my post as you are for the consequent festivity, when George thinks his happiness will be augmented by matrimony."

"When my mother is reflected, then, Mary, remember, Gunter shall have orders to forward a cake to America, expressly for you, with plenty of white ribbon."

"Nay, then, I think the sooner such a generous promise is fulfilled the better. I shall expect the first accounts will report progress, now both Beatrice and your friend are off your hands."

The departure of some of the party relieved Sir George from her badinage; and, in the course of a few weeks, many a weary mile of water rolled between two people who might have known much happiness together, had they not rejected its cultivation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee
Who knew thee too well:—
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

BYRON.

It was during the Carnival of 182-, and some months subsequent to the events recorded in the last chapter, that Lord Fitz Eustace and Mrs. Hamilton entered Naples, where they were in a short time to be rejoined by Mr. and Mrs. Delmar, who were making an excursion into the north of Italy, while their relatives pursued the road to the south, for the benefit of his Lordship's health, which had been in a precarious state some time. A severe fall while out hunting before he left Ireland, and of which little notice had been taken, was the

original cause of his indisposition, to which the circumstances of the last twelvemonths had not failed to contribute much. He was not, however, considered by his friends in any danger, and was attended by his children with tender solicitude, from place to place, as his fancy dictated. In Mrs. Hamilton he had a valuable companion, for she possessed every quality to soothe and comfort his mind, at the same time that she administered to the wants of his body. With the numerous noble qualities of his son he was already acquainted, for he had felt more affection—or rather, perhaps, more pride, for him than any one else, but Beatrice daily made advances in his favour, and endeared herself to every one.

Whilst alone with her father, Mrs. Hamilton scarcely left his side, and, as he did not join at all in the amusements of the season, she was seldom in public. With her brother, indeed, she was sometimes seen abroad, but when she first reached Naples he was absent, and, consequently, she was secluded. A few friends visited the Baron, who knew of his arrival, but he did not court society, for his malady being partly on the nerves, much company annoyed him.

On the second day of their sojourn, after

having taken a walk with Lord Fitz Eustace, Mrs. Hamilton was startled, on entering the Hotel, by seeing Mrs. Sinclair, who, with another lady and gentleman, were on the stairs. For an instant, she felt inclined to avoid her, for the past was most vividly and painfully recalled to her mind; but a single glance told her that retreat was impossible, as she was already recognised, and, with eager warmth, her friend came forward to meet her.

"To what fortunate circumstance am I to attribute the pleasure of seeing you here, my dear Mrs. Sinclair?" she said, after the first salutations were over, and she had introduced her father. "I can scarcely believe my own eyes!"

The good lady answered with a smile. "Health has been our principal object in this long journey, for the humidity of Ireland was very deleterious to Frederic, as well as myself, and we were advised to change the scene. A southern climate was recommended, and, though Frederic was quite averse to move at first, he would not hear of my giving up the plan of our medical friend. You know, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, if he have a fault in my eyes, it is that of being too fond of his mother; and, therefore, he went upon half pay on pur-

pose, as he kindly says, to devote his time to me. Ah! how delighted he will be to see you!"

Maria felt that the blood forsook her cheek, as the partial parent spoke of her son; and, anxious to conceal the trepidation she was under, she hastily informed Mrs. Sinclair that Lord Fitz Eustace was living at that hotel, and that, if she were disengaged, she should be happy to conduct her to their apartments. Mrs. Sinclair, however, excused herself on the ground of not being able to leave her friends, with whom she was lionising. "I will, however, avail myself of your kind invitation to-morrow," she said, "and, I doubt not, Frederic will be as desirous as myself to enjoy a chat with you. Apropos, have you heard that he is now a major?"

Maria replied in the negative, and her friend rejoined, "Ah! well, we shall have much to say to-morrow morning, for I intend to be with you quite early, so adieu, for the present."

During the rest of the day, Mrs. Hamilton was unusually depressed in spirits, for her interview with Mrs. Sinclair had raised up many thoughts, and re-opened many wounds, time and reason had soothed, and she dreaded lest Frederic should yield to his mother's solicitations, to attend her on her projected visit.

More than once in the course of the evening, Lord Fitz Eustace noticed her abstraction, and enquiring if she were unwell, proposed sending for advice. She assured him his fears were entirely groundless, and, to prove to him he was mistaken, sat down to their usual game of Ecarté. But still she could not fix her mind to it, she lost every thing, and at length her father, tired of combatting so insignificant an adversary, gave up the unequal contest, remarking, more kindly than she expected, "that as she did not seem disposed for cards, and he was tired with his walk, they would give up their customary amusement."

Although so greatly discomposed, before the time for Mrs. Sinclair's visit, Maria had prepared her mind to meet the only man she had ever loved, should he present himself before her; and to sustain that firmness, in word and deed, which had always so strongly characterised her. She had no occasion to be under any apprehension, for Sinclair was equally, if not more, fearful of the re-introduction than herself, and would not willingly have subjected either to the awkwardness his visit might produce. His mother knew nothing of his former attachment, and, supposing Frederic had ever looked upon Maria with the pure eye of friend-

ship, as she did herself, he no sooner returned home that evening than she accosted him by saying, "Well, my dear Frederic, who do you think I have seen to-day? A great favourite of yours, I can assure you."

The young man mentioned the names of several persons, which, like all so called upon, were the most unlikely to be right, and Mrs. Sinclair silently dissented. "No, no, Frederic, it was a lady, and you have guessed only men. Moreover, I have half engaged for you to go and call upon her with me to-morrow."

"A lady!" repeated the major, "and one of course I know well, as you have made this engagement. No foreigner, I hope, for I hate their levèes."

"I know you do, and therefore would not impose such a trial upon you, Fred," returned his mother, smiling. "Come, I fancy I must tell you—It was Mrs. Hamilton."

"Maria!" said Sinclair, quickly, while a bright glow was visible on his cheek, "then it must really have been her I saw yesterday."

"Likely enough, my dear, but you did not mention having done so."

"I was not sure, Mother, I only passed at some distance, and observed a person like her walking with an elderly man."

"Lord Fitz Eustace, to be sure," rejoined his mother, "why did you not speak to her?"

"Oh! I was anxious to get home to you, besides I hardly knew if I were right, she is so changed." He sighed, as he turned to the window, and Mrs. Sinclair said,

"She does look ill, but I found her as kind as ever, his lordship also quite pleasant; but, you must go and discover all this for yourself, I am sure she will be happy to see you."

"I cannot, mother," he replied, abruptly, "I am engaged."

"I can go any time in the course of the morning, Frederic, that you like, and will wait for you."

"It is useless, mother, I shall not be home until dinner time—but, tell me," he continued, after a short pause "how poor Maria seems?"

Mrs. Sinclair detailed the substance of their short interview, together with the account of Mrs. Hamilton's appearance, to which her son listened with deep attention, proving the interest he felt. No persuasions, however, were powerful enough to induce him to go with her in the morning, for our gallant soldier knew that he yet loved, though he dared not think how hopeless his affection was, after all that

had happened. The possibility of encountering her had been one of his reasons for wishing to stay in his native country, for he feared himself, should fate again throw them together. But his mother's indisposition gave him much uneasiness, and determined him on sacrificing his own feelings entirely for her sake. "How I should condemn myself," thought he, "if, by listening to my own fancies, I should entail pain, or perhaps death on my best friend,—my mother! whose every hope and wish has been for me! Surely she demands this concession, and undoubtedly she shall have it!" In consequence, he accompanied her on her tour, congratulating himself from time to time on his good fortune in still keeping clear of any part of Lord Fitz Eustace's family. On several occasions he had heard the name he almost dreaded, for in many places the Delmars had preceded him, but it was not until he reached Naples that he knew positively that they inhabited the same town.

Mrs. Sinclair expressed much astonishment at his refusal to attend her to Mrs. Hamilton's, but, as he pleaded business in extenuation of his conduct, she consented to dispense with his company, and entered Mrs. Hamilton's room alone, certainly somewhat to the satisfaction

of that lady, notwithstanding her resolution to receive Frederic without formality. The two ladies spent a long morning together in the enjoyment of friendly conversation, so gratifying to those who have long been separated. Mrs. Hamilton, indeed, had ever felt more attachment for Mrs. Sinclair than was demanded by acquaintanceship alone, and it may be supposed with what pleasure, though at the same time what pain, she spoke to her of the blow she had received. She did not enter into any particulars, for she was neither able nor willing to narrate the humiliating tale, and her friend knowing, from experience, the bitter pang of losing a husband in the full vigour of youth and health, rather endeavoured to draw her from herself, leading her to speak of her journey, her father, or, in short, any less distressing subject; for Mrs. Sinclair had heard enough of the affair, although it had carefully been hushed up, to make sure it was better for Mrs. Hamilton, as well as all her friends, that it should sink into oblivion as soon as possible. Maria learnt that the Sinclairs had taken lodgings in a neighbouring street for some time, not many minutes walk from the hotel she occupied; and, consequently, she must make up her mind to see Frederic constantly, since

it was improbable, during his mother's frequent visits, that they could long avoid collision.

Illness and circumstances had made her more nervous, for time had been when Mrs. Hamilton would have been able instantly to shake off the feelings she now experienced, and which it required some exertion to repel. The fact alone of Frederic's having been selected, by her cruel husband, to work her ruin, was enough to agitate her in the anticipated meeting, without recollecting also that she had partly fallen into the snare, and that Sinclair with herself had heard his supposed conduct openly declared. The fear of coming in contact with him would have confined her to the house, had not her father required her company in his walks, during one of which, two or three days after, they met the object of her avoidance with his mother. Both were distant, and perhaps both felt uneasy, but the ceremony of introducing the major to Lord Fitz Eustace, which Mrs. Sinclair was eager to perform, made a diversion in their favour, allowing them time for collecting their forces, as our soldier might have said.

This momentary respite was a welcome one, for the Baron, unconscious of the pain he inflicted, proposed that they should continue

their ramble together, to which neither Maria nor Sinclair thought it possible to offer any objection, as Mrs. Sinclair willingly consented, not supposing her son or Mrs. Hamilton could have any objection to each other's society. She remarked, indeed, their cool behaviour, but not comprehending it, she took no notice, and accepting Lord Fitz Eustace's proffered arm, left her son to escort Maria.

The major was not one likely to increase Mrs. Hamilton's pain, he was endowed with self-command, and accustomed to mix too much in general society, besides his wish to relieve her from discomfort, not to conceal his uneasiness. Assuming, therefore, the office assigned him without the slightest hesitation, he freely entered into conversation on the numberless attractive objects around. As he spoke, Maria felt grateful for the noble manner in which he had conducted himself; for the easy and graceful, yet lofty tone he maintained, entirely removed every trace of her discomposure. The hour they remained together was anything but irksome, though it had not been one of unrestraint, and Mrs. Hamilton heard her father express his hope, to Major Sinclair, of soon becoming better acquainted with him, with less displeasure than she might have done

a few days before, for she was willing to believe that Sinclair had seen the error he had formerly committed, and indeed she was tempted to judge him less harshly, since the avowal of the misguided Hamilton. Still her conduct was guarded, and even cold, when they met, which was frequently the case in the following month, as Lord Fitz Eustace took a great fancy to Frederic, and in the absence of Mortimer, constantly invited him to walk, to drive, or to partake some amusement, with them. Often did Sinclair endeavour to escape his intended kindness, for he thought his presence distressed Maria, but occasionally without success, as his mother generally marred his excuses, and he feared her penetration, if his desire of shunning the family was too much marked.

Mrs. Sinclair had several times asked the cause of his altered manner towards their friend, but without effect, for he skilfully evaded the question, though it always drove him to accept Lord Fitz Eustace's next favour, for fear of importunity.

CHAPTER XIX.

For thee I panted, thee I priz'd,
For thee I gladly sacrific'd
Whate'er I lov'd before;
And shall I see thee start away,
And, helpless, hopeless, hear thee say—
Farewell! we meet no more!

COWPER.

Mr. and Mrs. Delmar at length arrived, bringing with them an increase of happiness to their beloved relatives. Mortimer was sorry to find that the climate had not materially improved his father's health, though he appeared perfectly pleased with the situation he was in.

"I find several people I know, here, Mortimer," said his lordship, "more indeed, who are disposed to be attentive than I care to encourage, for I soon get tired of them, and myself also. I have, however, become acquainted with a very pleasant young man,

who, I am sure, you will like. His mother, too, has long been a friend of Maria's, I find, so that we see a great deal of them. Their name is Sinclair; but I do not yet know whether they be related to the Caithness family."

"Sinclair," repeated Delmar, thrown off his guard by surprise, and suddenly looking at his sister, who changed colour.

"Yes, do you know anything of him? Is he a friend of yours?"

"Oh! no, my Lord," he said, recollecting himself; "I have no acquaintance with any one of that name, but I am glad you have met with agreeable people, as I feared you had remained much alone, from your letters. I intend to resume my office of guide immediately, and show you all the wonders of this gay city, as I have had the advantage of exploring them all before."

To this proposal all were willing to agree, but Mortimer found, on enquiry, that Major Sinclair had already attended his father and sister, to many of the most celebrated spots in the neighbourhood.

"You will see the major to-morrow, Mortimer," said his father, "for he and his mother are going with us to Pompeii."

This information did not appear to please our hero, who felt completely puzzled by so extraordinary a coincidence as that of his lordship's high commendation of a person, he himself had fancied any thing but agreeable. He recollected, however, that Sinclair was not an uncommon name, and that this gentleman might have no affinity with Hamilton's dupe. He could not suppose that his sister would even see that man upon sufferance, yet, her countenance impressed him with the belief that he was the same. Perplexed, and ill at ease, he watched for an opportunity of speaking to Maria alone, and of settling his doubts. This he found no opportunity of doing that evening; but the following day, before the party assembled to go to the ruins, he ascertained from herself that his suspicions were correct, though he could not persuade her to allow him to inform Lord Fitz Eustace of the unconscious penalty he was imposing upon her. That day's excursion, she declared, could not be avoided; besides, both Frederic and his mother were to dine with them, and, consequently, they must meet. She was unwilling, also, that her father should know anything of the affair; as any reference to Hamilton disturbed him greatly.

While she made these objections to his wishes, Mortimer thought he detected a slight degree of anxiety in her manner, which raised a suspicion in his mind of her partiality for one, who had disputed with her late husband for her possession, when yet she had a hand to give. "As her father had arranged her marriage without consulting her," thought Delmar, "might she not have loved this man before?" It certainly was not improbable, and he resolved not to recur to the subject until he had been with her long enough to judge of her sentiments.

The day accordingly was spent at Pompeii, and the brother observed, with surprise, the distance and reserve maintained by both Maria and the major. If they conversed, it was with studied coldness, if Sinclair offered her any attention, it was rather with an appearance of respect than pleasure; and yet Mortimer saw him frequently fix his eyes upon her, as he thought, unobserved, and then suddenly remove them, as if angry at having permitted them to rest upon her. Sometimes the idea crossed the brother's mind that she had rejected his affection when a girl, but in that case, why should Charles have considered him fit for his purpose? Unable thus to come

to any positive conclusion, he let some days slip by in silence, during which he constantly met Sinclair at his father's, and elsewhere. All he saw of him he liked, for he found him pleasant and gentlemanly; and he recollected the high testimony of his worth given by Hamilton in his last moments. He soon felt persuaded that some unexplained circumstances between Maria and Sinclair had occasioned their extraordinary conduct, for which he hoped an opportunity would shortly offer itself of removing.

In consequence of these observations, Delmar acknowledged to Lord Fitz Eustace, when the question was put, that he was not surprised at the opinion formed by his Lordship, of his new acquaintance, since he was really a person likely to please everywhere. When upon the subject, Mortimer ventured to hint at Maria's apparent aversion to him, and Lord Fitz Eustace declared, with some surprise, his entire ignorance of such being the case. On the contrary, he told his son he had been led to believe that Sinclair had an increasing interest in Maria, which, he flattered himself he was fostering by throwing them together.

" But if you think, Mortimer," he continued,

"that I have been mistaken, and that Maria is annoyed by Sinclair, I will break off the acquaintance, for I will never put her in the way of any man she does not like, again." He spoke in a tone of bitter feeling, and Mortimer, unwilling to mention the whole affair, without his sister's permission, said, "Perhaps if you were to speak to her, my Lord, she might disclose the reason of the restraint they each maintain."

"I will do so, Mortimer, but I own I am very sorry she dislikes our new friend, for I have rarely met any one I have found more pleasant."

Accordingly, the baron interrogated Mrs. Hamilton on the subject, and desired her, with the kindest solicitude, to tell him if she had any reason to be displeased with the society of Sinclair. "Your brother, my dear Maria," he said, "who is ever so jealous of your happiness, fancies you are uneasy, and if such be the truth, you have only to inform me, and I will instantly do all you wish."

The colour went and came in her cheek, as she replied, "I owe you many thanks, my dear father, for your kindness, but you must excuse my entering into the detail of the reason of my behaviour to major Sinclair; it has re-

ference to circumstances I am quite unequal to re-consider. Mortimer, however, being acquainted with the principal one, is quite as capable as myself of giving you the information you require, and I give him perfect liberty to do so. I will also request him to act as you and he think advisable. If, my lord, you should feel any surprise at not having earlier known the facts he will relate, you must attribute my silence to the wish of sparing you pain."

Having failed to extract any elucidation from his daughter, Lord Fitz Eustace returned to Mortimer, who now, with Mrs. Hamilton's sanction, related that part of Hamilton's confession which regarded his project against Frederic, not omitting to mention his complete exculpation by the dying man. "I see Maria cannot overcome the shock her feelings have sustained," added Mortimer, "and I hope, my dear father, you will remove quickly to another part of the country for her sake."

"Indeed, I will," returned his lordship, "and had I been aware of all this before, she should never have been subjected to this distress. Not that I think her quite justified in being so severe, but there is no accounting for feelings, and since she is so deeply

hurt, we will make preparations for departure." The baron continued to converse for some time upon the subject, bitterly lamenting his own conduct throughout, and grieving for Mrs. Hamilton, who, Delmar concurred with him in believing, had been the object of Sinclair's affection before her marriage. "Alas!" thought her self-accusing parent, had I not been blinded by a foolish search for the attainment of consideration, she might now be the happy wife of an estimable man, who I can now admire. But why do I look back? I cannot recal the deeds I have committed, the past is all a dream, the future uncertainty, while the present alone is in our power! I will endeavour to employ it in contributing to the happiness of my children."

It was speedily arranged that Mrs. Hamilton, with her father, should proceed, the next morning but one, on their road to Sicily, and that Mortimer and Beatrice, after having remained in Naples sufficient time to satisfy their curiosity, should rejoin them at Palermo.

When Maria was apprised of this plan, she consented without hesitation, though her brother observed she appeared considerably

agitated. He therefore again pressed her to say if she had the slightest objection to the course about to be adopted, to which she replied in the negative; and, as she seemed anxious to escape farther discussion, little more was said. Lord Fitz Eustace, desirous of sparing her any unnecessary disquietude, now he was sensible of her uncomfortable position, himself called upon Major Sinclair in the morning, in order that, by announcing his departure, Maria might not have any chance of seeing him again. He thought, by taking leave of Frederic at his own apartments, every excuse for Sinclair to visit him again would be obviated.

Considerable surprise was manifested by Mrs. Sinclair at so sudden a resolution, and she would immediately have gone to her friend, had not a look from her son stopped her. He was at no loss to account for the removal, he only wondered at its not having taken place long before; and he plainly comprehended that Mortimer had been the instigator of this journey. That it was the best thing which could be adopted for all parties he was convinced, though he endured a thrill of intense agony when Lord Fitz Eustace mentioned the purport of his visit.

During the short time his Lordship remained, the major preserved his usual composure, but the door had scarcely closed after the baron, when he started up, and walked quickly to and fro.

In vain his mother spoke to him, inquiring why she was not to go to Mrs. Hamilton; in vain she entreated him to tell her what ailed him, for every trace of colour had left his cheek; he appeared equally deaf and blind, as he passed her unnoticed.

"My dearest Frederic," she said, affectionately taking hold of his arm, "pray tell me what is the matter?"

He seemed in a degree to recover himself when he felt her hand, and, after looking at her a moment, "Mother," he replied, "do not ask. I cannot tell you now. Perhaps some other time you may know how hard I have struggled to do my duty." After a moment's thought, he resumed: "You must not go to Mrs. Hamilton, she is leaving Naples to avoid me." His bitter tone surprised and grieved his fond parent, who, though she could not exactly comprehend its cause, now for the first time began to perceive that some mystery hung over Frederic and Maria, from which had originated the con-

duct she had so often, yet so uselessly, sought to penetrate. Her eyes filled with tears as she quitted her hold, saying, "You know Frederic, I have every confidence in you, and since you request this, it shall be done without a comment; but can I not, at least, write to Maria? I may never see her again."

Sinclair sighed heavily, and, without replying, leaned against the window in deep abstraction. Seeing him in so incomprehensible a state, Mrs. Sinclair forebore farther importunity, and for some moments anxiously watched his changing countenance. At length he appeared more calm, and, observing she was looking distressed, he said, as he kissed her, "I shall go out, mother, for I am sure I am neither doing you nor myself any good here. I dare say I shall be home by dinner time, but if not, do not wait." He took his hat, and departed without opposition, for Mrs. Sinclair was unwilling to add to his discomposure by any farther questions; but, as the weary hours crept on, her maternal fears augmented for his safety, and numberless were the conjectures she formed, and the reasons she assigned for his agitation, ere her idolised son returned.

CHAPTER XX.

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles,
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate,
His tears, pure messengers from his heart,
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.

SHAKSPEARE.

Although our friend Frederic had so keenly felt the reserve of Mrs. Hamilton, during the period of his forced visits; and although he had endeavoured by every means in his power to avoid temptation, he felt the most alarming regret on hearing it was the intention of Lord Fitz Eustace to proceed on his journey. At that moment, he became conscious of the secret pleasure he had unwittingly received from being with her, although he had constantly been reminded, by her manner, of the harsh opinion she had every reason to entertain of him. He was absolutely terrified at his sensations, and most bitterly did

he repent his false security. He discovered that he had overrated his strength, in supposing he could so constantly see unmoved, one he had so fervently loved; for, notwithstanding her conduct, and his own assumed indifference, he found that his affection had fatally increased. To part from her was a severer pang than he had anticipated, but that was a trifle, in comparison to the idea of her quitting the city, in consequence of the false impression she had imbibed, and the misconstruction of his actions. If he could only convince her, by the most complete and candid explanation, of the erroneous judgment she had formed of him, he believed he should be happy, or at least contented; and without which he felt he never could be so. These were the tumultuous thoughts which occupied his mind on the departure of Lord Fitz Eustace, thoughts which made him insensible to the voice of parental tenderness, and which racked his soul to its very centre. He could not endure to witness his mother's uneasiness, and yet be constrained to hide the cause from her, though, as her participation was useless, he was averse to give her pain by the communication. Therefore he left her as we have

already said, and during the solitary walk he indulged for several hours after, he succeeded in recovering the composure necessary for putting in practice the resolution he then formed.

With feelings of renewed hope, in consequence of his reflections, he traced his way towards the hotel where Lord Fitz Eustace resided, and, entering unobserved, or at least unquestioned, for he was a well known visiter of the English Nobleman,' he mounted the stairs for the first time, with uncontrolled pleasure. A smile of bitter, stern, determination, crossed his countenance, as he approached the Baron's room door, which he gently opened. Mrs. Hamilton was the sole occupant of the apartment, and, for an instant, a slight change was visible in her look, when she recognised the intruder.

Frederic had expected, and intended, to see Lord Fitz Eustace, or his son, therefore he felt somewhat startled on finding himself alone with Maria; but his resolution was immediately formed, and he determined to take advantage of the propitious moment, by making her the depository of the explanation he had intended for the ears of her father or brother.

"Pardon this intrusion, Mrs. Hamilton,"

he said, advancing towards her. "I came with the hope of finding his Lordship at home."

"My father has been gone out a few minutes only, Major Sinclair," she replied, in her usual manner, "and I am sorry I cannot inform you when he is likely to return."

"May I then hope—may I request, Mrs Hamilton, you will allow me to make the application to yourself, which I had intended to make through his lordship?"

Maria turned a little pale, and for an instant hesitated, when he continued, "You leave Naples to-morrow, I believe,—and we part for ever! Would, indeed, we had never met, for both our sakes—but fate has ordered it otherwise! We have long been acquainted, and unfortunate circumstances have conspired to give you an evil opinion of me, as unjust as it is unfounded—I know appearances have been against me—I know I have at times been imprudent, but I have not merited the scorn and hatred you have manifested lately. I would live in your memory without reproach, and I come, as a suppliant, to request you will listen to an explanation of my apparently guilty conduct."

"No, no, Major Sinclair," interrupted Maria, quickly, half rising as she spoke, "I

cannot hear all this—Indeed you are ungenerous to require me to revert to the past."

"Let me entreat you, Mrs. Hamilton," he replied, in a tone of remonstrance, "as you value the happiness of a fellow creature, to hear me—you cannot refuse, I see you will not." He gently laid his hand upon her arm to detain her, when she said, "You will not oblige me to remain, Major Sinclair?"

"No, by heavens!" he returned, drawing back, and colouring highly. "Yet, be not so obdurate, Maria, you once were kind—be so again, and I will promise, if you desire it, nay, I will swear, never to annoy you again by my presence." His tone was so earnest, yet so sad, that Mrs. Hamilton found it impossible to resist, and her determination of frigidity was half vanquished, when he pronounced her name in his expostulation.

In a tremulous voice she said, as she reseated herself, "If I can give you any satisfaction by according your demand, I am ready to do so, but——"

"Ah! Mrs. Hamilton, spare me any more objections, and permit me to avail myself of your generosity—Your manner the last month has convinced me that you have neither forgiven, nor forgotten, the occurrence which took

place some time ago, and conduct of mine, which was certainly liable to censure, however much it was intended for the best—I am about to speak of thoughts and feelings you are to consider as long since dead, therefore, let not their expression distress you, for to testify my innocence is my only object."

Maria trembled violently, but, not attempting to interrupt him, he continued, "You believe me base enough to have sought to alienate your affection from your husband—I heard the foul calumny breathed in your presence, by whom I know not; and though, at that moment, I could have refuted it, as conscientiously as I do now, I was so stunned at the charge, so fearful of giving you unnecessary pain, that I resolved sooner to be considered a heartless, a detected villain, than inflict one pang on—on the heart of—of my friend—I may have felt sincere pleasure in your society,—I may have enjoyed too much of your friendship, but heaven is my witness how little I thought of injuring you, or I would long before have sacrificed every wish, every hope, as indeed, I had done, to my duty. When first I knew you, Mrs. Hamilton, I was blindly led by my feelings to take a dangerous delight in your kindness, from which I was not aroused until duty called

me away—Then I acknowledged my weakness to myself, for I felt I—I loved—Nay, do not let me distress you," he said, seeing the painful flush which spread itself over her face. "Receive my confession, as that of a dying man, whose feelings, whether good or evil, will soon be buried with him."

Maria started, the colour fled from her cheek, "Sinclair," she said, hurriedly, "why speak of the grave? Alas! what do you meditate?"

"My duty," returned the major, firmly: "but let me proceed—I said I loved—it is true—I could have sacrificed every earthly consideration to have called you mine—but I was poor!—I was untitled!—I could not—would not, ask you to seek poverty and obscurity for me—I heard Lord Fitz Eustace sought noble alliances for his family, and I could not venture to probe your sentiments, only to tell you I must quit you for ever—for my love was hopeless!—I tore myself away from Merton, Mrs. Hamilton, without revealing the fire that consumed me; for your sake, leaving the field open to my rival—I consented to be condemned and upbraided in silence, rather than place you in the state of despair in which I found myself—You may despise my folly, Maria, you may wonder at my presumption—but the heart is an unruly

steed, and is not to be managed without a watchful eye, and a severe bit. I had relaxed both these over mine, and I paid the penalty. Do you credit this declaration? Can you exculpate me, in this instance, from wilful deceit?"

"I must not doubt your word, your honour, Major Sinclair," returned Mrs. Hamilton, with an effort, for an instant raising her eyes from the floor, where they were firmly directed. She, indeed, had more the appearance of a criminal than he who addressed her, for she dared not look at Frederic, for fear of betraying the emotions which struggled in her bosom. Every word she was constrained to utter, she feared would force with it the surcharged tear, which already stood in her eye; while her colour came, and went, with a rapidity denoting her suffering.

Sinclair, on the contrary, sat nearly opposite to her, calm and undaunted, though, now and then, as he marked her increasing agitation, a shade of augmented sadness passed over his features. "I thank you," he answered, coldly. "My word may then, perhaps, suffice to convince you that my honour was outraged by being supposed the betrayer of the wife of my friend; at least, a friend in the general acceptation of the word—the cruel deceiver of the

woman I once loved—and for whom I had sacrificed my happiness on earth."

Here his overpowered auditress, unable longer to repress her feelings, covered her face with her handkerchief, to conceal the tears which flowed copiously, and Sinclair continued more earnestly: "Oh! Mrs. Hamilton, believe me imprudent—believe me arrogant of my mental powers—believe me selfish—but acquit me of the wish to injure you—to supersede your late husband in your affection. That fatal, that base, declaration, which warned you of your supposed danger from me, has never ceased to vibrate in my ear, and to tell me that, though not guilty of the criminal intention it denounced, at least, I had entailed mortification on you, and hatred and disgust on myself. Willingly would I have refuted the accusation before I went to Ireland, but how could I clear myself from the imputed crime, without owning the ardent, the imprudent, love I had once entertained for you—without committing the very fault of which I was accused, by declaring how deep, how unchangeable had been my affection for Miss Delmar? a declaration which was forbidden to the ear of Mrs. Hamilton. I saw I should only appear more despicable in your eyes, and I was silent.

Judge my feelings since the time I left you—my conduct unexplained, my character, with you, blighted—judge the agony I endured in determining to quit you, knowing I must be considered all—and perhaps much more—than I had heard myself proclaimed! But I overcame it, to spare you the pain of declarations I knew might not gain belief, for I had no means of proving my innocence. When we met here, Mrs. Hamilton, Lord Fitz Eustace, to our mutual aversion, invited me to his table, and I have in vain endeavoured to shun his kindness for your, and my own, sake; I have felt your severity far deeper than I dare express; and, when I heard to-day you were going to fly my hated vicinity, I determined to inform your father of the truth. You know the rest, Mrs. Hamilton; I found you alone, I have told you all—will you acquit—will you believe, me?"

Maria would have spoken, but her chest heaved convulsively, her breath came thick and short, while the large tears rolled over her pale cheeks. Sinclair took her offered hand, and, gazing earnestly upon her, continued, "Will you forgive the avowal of my love, Maria, and believe the purity of that alone

was a sufficient barrier to any evil designs against you?"

"I will—I do, indeed, Frederic," at length she articulated, with difficulty; "I believe you have been calumniated, and that honour has guided your conduct throughout. Perhaps, indeed, I have not thought so ill of you as you have supposed."

"Then, why Maria, treat me so contemptuously—why leave Naples on my account?"

The blood rushed in torrents into Mrs. Hamilton's face, the tears again started to her eyes; but, before she could answer, Frederic resumed, with less distance, than he had before maintained, "Have I been mistaken, and do you go against your will?"

"Lord Fitz Eustace's health——" she faltered.

"Ah! true, I had forgotten." One instant he paused; his countenance assumed a darker expression, then rising, abruptly, he took her hand, saying, "May every earthly good attend you, Mrs. Hamilton! I deeply thank you for the patience, the indulgence, with which you have listened to me; and your kind exculpation has restored me, if not to happiness, at least to the prospect of content. Pity and

forget the ill-fated Frederic Sinclair." He relinquished her hand, and turned to the door, but, ere he reached it, the unfortunate Maria, as she faintly uttered his name, had sunk senseless on the floor.

In one second, Sinclair was again at her side, in no small alarm; with dangerous tenderness he raised and bore her to a sofa; and, having essayed in vain to restore her suspended animation, by freely admitting the air into the apartment, and calling her by every endearing name, he was about to summon some one to Maria's assistance, when the room door opened, and Lord Fitz Eustace, with Mr. and Mrs. Delmar, entered.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed the major, with an earnestness which amply testified his previous anxiety, "thank Heaven! you are returned, my lord, in time to save her."

"Save who?" said the baron, eagerly, as he advanced to the couch. "Maria! Sinclair! what does all this mean?"

"Mrs. Hamilton has been taken ill, my lord," returned Frederic, impatiently, while Beatrice hastened up to the couch, and began to attempt Maria's renovation.

"And are you the cause of her indisposition, sir?" enquired her father, in no gentle tone.

"Unhappily, I am my lord. I had taken my leave of Mrs. Hamilton, when she was seized in the manner you see."

"You were going to leave her, then?" said Mortimer, looking quickly at his father.

"I was, Mr. Delmar—to leave her for ever!" After pronouncing these words, with bitter emphasis, he turned, with his companions, to the invalid, who appeared now to be recovering. Her eyes, as they unclosed, wandered anxiously from one affectionate face to another of those friends who surrounded her, until they rested on that of Sinclair, when her cheek crimsoned, and, bursting into tears, she for some time sobbed hysterically. That single look, however, had been enough for Frederic. How often is not the language of the eye more eloquent than words! That single look bespoke feelings which he had not ventured for one moment to harbour; feelings he had come to renounce—to resign for ever! It told him of a love until now unknown, and against which he had so vehemently struggled. Pale and motionless he stood—the sudden revulsion from despair to hope, created by this glance, almost transfixed him—he looked fearfully upon Maria, scarcely believing the evidence of his senses, so unexpected had been the ray of

comfort which now pierced through the cloud of deepest gloom, which had overshadowed him so long.

He forgot every prudential measure, he forgot his want of title—he forgot he was in the presence of any save her he had so hopelessly loved, and, taking her hand, in his trembling grasp, he silently, but fervently, pressed it. The thrill of delight which ran through his frame, as he recognised her timid return, recalled him to himself, when he saw that his friends had left him alone with Mrs. Hamilton.

The kind Mortimer, in fact, divining the cause of his beloved sister's indisposition, no sooner saw that she had partially recovered than he gently drew his wife and father from the room; and, as he closed the door, his affectionate heart glowed with the anticipated pleasure of seeing Maria at length restored to happiness, by becoming the cherished wife of the only man she had ever loved.

Having modestly, and considerately, accompanied Delmar in his retreat, we must plead ignorance of the conversation which succeeded between Frederic and Maria. We believe, however, our readers are sufficiently acquainted with the dispositions of each to fathom the result. Mutually attached, though restrained

from evincing or acknowledging their real feelings, by their high sense of honour, they only required a few minutes of renewed confidence to remove the veil which had so long hung around the actions of each. Sinclair's undisguised explanation had paved the way to the subsequent declaration of his unbounded love. Need we say how sincerely, though timidly, it was returned, or how rapturously Frederic received the promise of the hand he had despaired of obtaining. No! all those who have followed him in his upright path can imagine his feelings, and will believe, although Mrs. Hamilton required in her concession, that the eighteenth month of her widowhood should have expired, ere she became his—he thought himself supremely blessed—and most joyfully accepted the conditions. Lord Fitz Eustace neither could nor would object to the contemplated union—he had imbibed too strong a desire of repairing the errors he had committed in arranging Maria's former marriage, not to acquiesce most cordially in this second alliance of her own choice.

It was on the following morning, to that on which the major had expected for ever to be separated from her whose image had so long been enshrined in his heart, that he obtained

the entire approval of his lordship to the connection.

"I have received too severe a lesson, Sinclair," said he, "not to listen with a willing ear to the appeal of affection, for I feel persuaded you had Maria's love long before I unfortunately exerted my power; and, although she was the exemplary wife of Hamilton, her heart could never be called his. She is a gem of rare value, my young friend," he continued, as he conducted our enraptured soldier into the adjoining room, where Mrs. Hamilton was seated with her brother and Beatrice. The former blushed deeply, and her eyes were suffused with tears, not those of grief, however, as her father, placing her hand in that of Frederic, said to the latter, in reference to his last words, "Take and appreciate her, for she is fitted to adorn the state of the man she loves: may you both be as happy as you deserve to be, as a reward for your trials and unshrinking virtue.—I trust experience has taught me to look for surer hopes of felicity, in that of my children, than in the attainment of empty names and dazzling splendour, which are, at best, but unstable foundations for real happiness. To dwell amidst the four beings I love most on earth, and to contemplate your smiling coun-

tenances," he pursued, looking affectionately at his companions, "will be a comfort to me, after all the evil that I have brought upon myself and others."

This undisguised avowal of a change of sentiment amply testified how keenly Lord Fitz Eustace had felt the late events, thus to have crushed all his darling schemes, all his former cherished hopes; and, by degrees, to make him regard the love of his children with more solicitude than their aggrandizement. But so it was, he had been brought by disappointment, illness, and consequent reflection, to acknowledge his faults; and, though this was the first time he had openly declared his feelings, his son and daughter had some time before perceived, with pleasure, that he was becoming a convert to the superiority of mental, over external, qualifications.

"I trust, my lord," replied Sinclair, "neither Maria, nor you, will ever have to repent the generous kindness that is now conferred upon me. That I may prove myself worthy of it, believe me, shall be my constant endeavour."

"I doubt it not, Frederic," answered his lordship, smiling; "and if ever looks were a true index of the mind, Maria's declare her perfect confidence—I am now only solicitous that you

all should be happy, and love each other, which I am persuaded such conduct as yours cannot fail permanently to secure."

All united in thanking the Baron for his gratifying expressions of satisfaction in their favour, assuring him, at the same time, of their constant desire to afford him every comfort in their power—a promise they failed not to fulfil: and the once haughty Baron, for some months, tasted a purer draught of happiness in the society of his amiable children, though neither had consulted his former ambitious views, than he had ever enjoyed, when in the full contemplation of his lofty flights.

In Beatrice, and Frederic, he gained a new son and daughter, who vied with his own in soothing the pillow of disease; and, when, a few months after seeing Maria and Sinclair indissolubly united, he sank into the grave, his last breath was employed in returning thanks to heaven for warning him of his dangerous course; and giving him time for repentance, and the due appreciation of the different members of his family.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Now let us thank th' Eternal Power; convinc'd
That Heaven but tries our virtue by affliction:
That oft the cloud which wraps the present hour
Serves but to brighten all our future days."

ANONYMOUS.

Sir George Heron, and his kind mother alternated between the Metropolis and the estates of the former, during the absence of their friends from England, in whose joys and sorrows they failed not to sympathise, though the accounts they received from America diverted their thoughts for some time. Sir George, indeed, was more anxious about Lady Dinely than might have been expected, after all that had passed; but the baronet still felt an unchangeable interest in his cousin, an ardent wish for her happiness, increased, perhaps, by the conviction that she had taken a doubtful means for procuring it.

A very short time confirmed the sad forebodings he had formed, in his several opportunities of judging of Mary's prospects, for all her letters from the Western world breathed a spirit of grief and despondency, which deeply affected her friends. Sir Harry continued to dissipate his remaining property by gambling, regardless of the interests of his wife and children, until he became again involved to a frightful amount. The interest of Mary's property alone preserved them from distress, and furnished the means for a constant change of abode, by which they eluded his importunate creditors.

After this intelligence, a long interval succeeded without any farther tidings of her, and her friends began to entertain the greatest uneasiness, when their minds were diverted by the announcement of Lord Fitz Eustace's decease at Milan, and the intention of his family to repair to their native country. But, ere this joyful proposal could be accomplished, letters from New York arrived, conveying the distressing news of the death of Sir Harry Dinely, who had fallen in a duel, leaving his family in great difficulties. The friend, who communicated this intelligence, expressed the greatest uneasiness with regard to the widow, who was

completely overcome by the dreadful shock, and serious apprehensions were entertained for her life. These accounts were speedily followed by others in confirmation of their worst fears. Every thing had been done to restore Lady Dinely, but in vain. She had expired a few weeks after her husband of a fever, leaving a letter, the last she had written, which she desired might be delivered with her child into the hands of her aunt.

"In consequence of this request," ran the words of the letter from her friend, "I will send the boy to England as soon as I receive funds for that purpose, until which time, I, myself will be his guardian." Upon this every measure was adopted by the Herons to further the intentions of the benevolent friend of the ill-fated Mary; and in anxious suspense they waited for the answers to the letters they had immediately despatched.

Nearly two years had elapsed, since the village bells of Bernersford had pealed merrily in celebration of the marriage of the honourable Mortimer Delmar, when the Hall again became the theatre of rejoicing from the anticipated arrival of the travellers, who had promised to dedicate some weeks to Sir George and Lady Heron, upon their return to England, prior to their installation in their own residences.

The day on which they were expected was one of nervous agitation to the good Lady Heron; she had every thing in preparation many hours before there was any possibility of their accomplishing the journey; and, incapable of settling herself to her usual avocations, she wandered from room to room in impatient restlessness.

Sir George also, notwithstanding his vaunted stoicism, loitered round the house, or spent his time in watching the various objects through his telescope, as they passed along the high road at some distance. Sometimes he threw himself on the velvet lawn, and endeavoured to read, but in vain! the book was soon hurled to a distance; and he again returned to his mother to discuss the probable time of their friends' arrival. Five o'clock came, and George's patience was on the wane, when he rushed into the room where Lady Heron was sitting, to apprise her of their approach.

The baronet received his beloved sister on the same spot they had parted, and, for some moments, every feeling was absorbed in the joy of the re-union. All were warmly welcomed, but the reception George gave his friend was expressive of the strong brotherly affection which had sprung from the pure seeds of

friendship, that for so many years had bound them together. In boyhood they had learnt to appreciate the character of each other, and they mutually rejoiced in the prospect of the constant communion afforded by their relationship.

The lovely infant that Beatrice had presented to her fond husband, a few months before, came in for a due share of admiration, and tended by its presence to enhance the delight of the travellers' return.

Major and Mrs. Sinclair were equally satisfied with the attention lavished upon them, and uninterrupted happiness and comfort reigned throughout the mansion. The whole party indeed appeared like one large family, so well did they assimilate, and Lady Heron participated most fully in the blessings around her.

The untimely fate of her niece alone acted as a corrective to the unbounded satisfaction she received from the approximation of all she loved; but when, after some time, the little child arrived in England, and, according to the wishes of its mother, become the ward of Sir George Heron, she felt more resigned to her loss, from an idea that, in cherishing the young scion of the house of Dinely, she had not wholly been deprived of the power of shewing

her maternal affection for her niece. From the unhappy Mary's letter, her friends learnt with pain the misery she had brought upon herself, through her folly. Happiness had fled from her since her marriage, for her husband had treated her with the utmost harshness, partly merited, she allowed, for indifference, and thoughtless levity had marked her conduct. Most severely, however, was she punished, for she considered herself as the sole cause of Sir Harry's death, as the duel originated from a dispute caused by her flirtation.

Thus had this foible been her bane, for, by it she had lost the love of her cousin, the esteem of her friends, and the life of her husband, besides innumerable hours of distress to herself.

She concluded her letter by the strongest expressions of repentance, and sincere hopes of pardon for her trangressions, in which the Herons most fervently united.

Years have rolled away, since the events above detailed. Smiling families have crowned the unions of the Sinclairs and Fitz Eustaces, augmenting the happiness of all.

Sir George Heron is still single, and, for the present, appears determined to preserve his liberty. His house, where his venerable mother

continues to preside as formerly, is the constant resort and rendezvous of his family and friends, among whom, Frederic Sinclair and his doting parent hold no inconsiderable place. Our friend, Mortimer Delmar, now Lord Fitz Eustace, has placed a tablet, in Claybrook church, to the memory of Ellen, of whose existence no other trace now remains, save that, her virtues and sorrows have left in the minds of those who loved her; for her child who might have demanded their attention, fell a victim to the hooping-cough, when about two years old. Yet, although the same motive does not exist for Lord Fitz Eustace's return to a spot rendered so painful by circumstances, as if it had lived, he has frequently been seen during his temporary visits to Heron Castle, attended by his beloved Beatrice, beside the humble grave of the Village Flower, and tears of pity have moistened the turf beneath which innocence and virtue repose—

> "In vain the dews of Heaven descend above,
> The bleeding flower, and blasted fruit of love."

Having thus assembled all our surviving friends, and made them pass in review before us, we draw a curtain over the future; hoping that those who may have leisure, or inclination

to follow the steps of the Baron's family will acknowledge the danger of committing a first fault, and the evils attendant upon pride and selfishness, in opposition to the permanent advantages derivable from a strict adherence to generosity and uprightness.

Let every one beware of the first fault, since it is impossible to tell into what a labyrinth of crime they may be drawn, ere they have power to extricate themselves, and at length are overtaken in their guilty course by a just, though perhaps a heavy, punishment.

THE END.

HIGHFIELD TOWER.

HIGHFIELD TOWER.

CHAPTER I.

Sighing, as through the shadowy past,
Like a tomb-searcher, memory ran,
Lifting each shroud that time had cast
O'er buried hopes, he thus began :—

It was a beautiful summer evening, the sun was just sinking into a radiant bank of clouds, which veiled the western horizon, and the bright fleecy vapours that emanated from his receding glory, hovering round his retreat, like gay and dazzling courtiers in the suite of Majesty, spreading themselves in long trains over the clear blue vault of heaven; each tint increasing in brilliancy as the orb of day declined. The air, yet impregnated with the noontide heat, slightly agitated the leaves and smaller branches of the noble

timber trees, which stood in picturesque groups over a wide extent of park land; bearing on its balmy breath the sweet song of many a tiny vocalist, mingled with the soft tinkle of the sheep-bell, and the low hum of the neighbouring village, which lay without the verge of the domain. Upon a slight elevation towards the centre of the estate, the site of an ancient fortress, stood an extensive square building of red brick, which was partially concealed by a clump of luxuriant cedars, though sufficient was visible to denote the form and scale of the edifice. It was flanked on one side only by a solitary wing, which would have imparted an air of irregularity to the whole, had not the conservatory, the work of modern days, stood on the other side, and partly compensated for this apparent error in the structure. The velvet lawn, separated by an invisible fence from the park, sloped away on the left to a fine sheet of water, which, from a small though rapid stream in the higher part of the valley, here assumed the character of a lake, studded with woody islets.

A handsome stone bridge of a single arch and simple architecture, was thrown across

the narrowest part, over which ran the road from the entrance-gate to the mansion.

Upon the parapet leaned a stout, healthy man of about fifty years of age, whose appearance bespoke him an upper servant attached to the property. For some minutes his eyes wandered with visible pride and satisfaction over the pleasing scene around him; he seemed to contemplate every thing with inward pride, until the lake became the object of his observation, when a shade of melancholy crossed his brow, and he quickly turned to another part of the park, the contemplation of which appeared more gratifying. The approach of a young man, his junior by five-and-twenty summers, in a similar rank of life to his own, roused him, and he turned with a smile, saying, "Well, Plowden, how is your father to-night?"

"Thank you, Mr. Prior, he is something better," replied he, "and we have yet hopes of seeing him about again."

"That is well, Ralph; but what brings you here this evening?"

"Oh! nothing particular, sir, only I thought I would just take a stroll through the park, as the new Earl comes down to-morrow. I

suppose we shall not be allowed to shew our faces here any longer?"

"There cannot be such free range over the place, of course;" returned the other, "but I hope we shall not find a harder master than my late lord; he was all kindness and munificence, certainly; but, from what I have seen of the present Earl, I think we shall not have any cause of complaint, he appears anxious all should be satisfied."

"I am glad you think so, Mr. Prior; pray do you know any thing of the family?" inquired the young man.

"Very little, Ralph, for General Stracy passed his early life in India, and, since his return to this country, has lived wholly in Devonshire. He was the only brother of my late lord, and has several children. I saw Lord Stracy, the eldest, when I was in London some months since, and a fine young man he is, about three or four-and-twenty, I should think."

"Well! it will be quite a novelty to me for Highfield Tower to be inhabited; for you know it has been quite deserted ever since my father has rented the Barron Farm, and that will be ten years come Michaelmas."

"Yes, Plowden," rejoined Mr. Prior with a deep sigh and a shake of the head; "it is a matter of fifteen years since the death of the countess, and her husband never returned here after that. I know he could not bear even to think of the place. Poor gentleman! he lost his all in losing her." Again Mr. Prior bent over the bridge, and gazed on the quiet landscape, with mixed pleasure and pain. Ralph, however, was not inclined to let him indulge his thoughtful mood, for he quickly said,

"I wonder he did not dispose of the property, as he had such an aversion to it."

"Doubtless he would have done so," answered his companion, "had not his lady requested him to keep the place, for her sake."

"Oh! indeed, I never heard that."

"Come then," replied the functionary kindly, "let us go down to the village, for I must see Simpson to-night; and we will share a mug of ale, while I tell you about the event which deprived us of our lord's presence."

This proposition was willingly acceded to by Plowden, and a quarter of an hour's walk brought the companions to the little cluster of cottages forming the village of Highfield.

Notwithstanding it did not number more

than one-hundred-and-fifty inhabitants, it could boast its church, and tidy alehouse, both equally indebted for their erection to the late noble proprietor of Highfield Tower: and its cottages, scattered over an area of a quarter of a mile in extent, were all neatly white-washed, and bore an air of comfort and cleanliness which could not fail to convey an impression of the happiness and contentment of their inmates.

Mr. Prior proceeded immediately to discuss his business with the jolly host of the Trefoil Arms; after which he called for the ale, and sat down with Ralph, on the rustic bench which encircled the old tree before the door of the little inn.

"You must have heard, Plowden," he said, in a few minutes, "that I have been many years at Highfield, indeed, it is turned twenty-five since I was engaged by my late master to superintend this estate. He was then in the habit of spending much of the summer here with the Countess, who was so greatly attached to the place, that it was not without difficulty he persuaded her to leave it for the gaieties of London, and the fashionable watering-places in their seasons. She was much younger than my lord, who did not marry till rather late in

life; and she was altogether one of the most beautiful and sweetest ladies ever seen. So free and kind to all—so sensible, and willing to be the friend of those who required her assistance. She it was who built the cottages of our poor, and procured land to be allotted to each. She established the school, and awarded prizes to the most deserving in the village. It is not therefore wonderful if she were almost adored; and the young Lord Stracy—for at that time she had a noble boy—was almost as much a favourite as herself. I remember, as if it were but yesterday, how merrily he used to dance round me, as I went about my business in various parts of the estate, enquiring the meaning and use of all the agricultural proceedings. Then he would tell me what he would do when he became a man, and how he would have me for a bailiff! Poor fellow! I little thought, at those happy moments, how soon his gay voice would be hushed, and his light laugh no longer heard in his favourite fields." The good man paused an instant; and his companion said:—

"Ah! how old was my young lord, then, Mr. Prior? I scarcely ever heard you mention him."

"It is a sore subject with me," rejoined the bailiff, sadly, "I loved him nearly as well as my own children, and it was some time after his death before I could bear to hear his name, with composure. He was, I think, about eight or nine, then; a fine, daring boy, though, I must say, a spoiled one. Well, he had a private tutor, until he was thirteen, when my lord determined to send him to Westminster school; that he might learn, as he himself told me, that there were others in the world to be thought of besides himself; which, I must say, was very just and necessary, for Lord Stracy knew not the meaning of the word opposition. This plan was strongly combatted by my lady, who, having lost all her other children quite young, was doubly averse to giving up this only treasure; but the Earl said so much, and appeared so bent upon the measure, that she at length consented, on condition that they should reside entirely in London, to be near the child. It was a sad change to us all, down here, I assure you, when they left; but some of Lord Stracey's holidays were spent at Highfield; and we expected the return of the family, as soon as his education was concluded at Westminster. Thus passed two years, when the midsummer vacation brought down the

Earl, with a large party of friends, and, for the last time, we were gay. Lord Stracy was so grown and improved we scarcely knew him, though he still continued the same kind, amiable, creature he had ever been, and all went on happily for several weeks. Now, during the time my young lord had been at school, he had become very fond of boating; and, being an excellent hand at the oar, many was the morning he spent in rowing about the lake in the park, though my lady, having a great aversion to the water, used often to endeavour to prevent his indulging in his favourite amusement. Unhappily, her worst fears were too fatally realised! Never shall I forget that sad day! and when you found me to-night, Ralph, on the bridge, the pleasure I experienced in seeing the estate I have so long superintended look so nice and flourishing, previous to the arrival of my new lord, was so mixed up with the pain recalled by the scene of Lord Stracy's death, that I cannot tell which preponderated; and, I really was quite glad when you joined me."

"I can easily comprehend your feelings, Mr. Prior, but I will not interrupt you."

"It was a beautiful morning in August," proceeded the other, "and I was in one of the

new plantations, about a mile from the house, when Lord Stracy came to me; and, after asking several questions about the business I was upon, said, as he went away, 'My father is coming down here this morning, Prior, on his way to Barron Farm; therefore, be so good as to tell him I shall meet him there.' These were the very last words he spoke to any one, Plowden!"

"Poor young gentleman," said his attentive listener, "then it was the very farm my father now holds he appointed to go to. But pray go on, Mr. Prior: how did the accident happen?"

"We never knew, exactly," returned the good bailiff, "but I will tell you all we found out. The Earl arrived about mid-day, and, after hearing his son's message, continued his walk. I thought no more about the matter until four o'clock in the afternoon, when one of the servants came, and asked me if I could tell him where Lord Stracy was? at the same time saying that the Earl had not seen him at Barron Farm; consequently, both he and my lady were very uneasy. I knew nothing of him, but I immediately accompanied the man to the lake; for my young master had so often been found there, that it was the first place I

thought of. The boat was not to be seen, but I felt sure of finding my lord somewhere near, and went on to that part, where the wood hangs so much over the water. On turning the corner beyond the bridge, the first thing that met my sight was a floating oar, and, I hardly knew why, I felt a cold shudder run through me; while a vague sensation of fear oppressed me. I loudly called my young master, and, receiving no answer, hurried on until the boat appeared, turned bottom upwards. This completely did for me, Plowden; in one moment the horrible truth flashed on my mind, and I became almost unable to act or think, when Lord Stracy's hat was found under the boat; and little doubt could be entertained of the dreadful accident we had to deplore. No time, however, was to be lost; I quickly procured assistance; but, almost before we had recovered from our first horror, sufficiently to take the necessary measures in such a case, the wretched news having spread like wildfire, the distracted Earl and Countess joined us; and, notwithstanding the most earnest entreaties to the contrary, they persisted in remaining to witness the process of dragging that part of the lake. Never shall I forget the frantic scream of my lady, as our

labours terminated in the recovery of the dear boy's body, or the agony of my master, as he endeavoured to tear the Countess from her son's corpse. It was a sight, Ralph, to have moved a heart of stone, and is as vivid now, to my mind's eye, as at the moment of its occurrence. But I dare not think of the scene which followed, it is enough to say that all our exertions failed to restore Lord Stracy; and, from that hour, his mother never held up her head! Her reason forsook her for many weeks, and when, by degrees, that was partially recovered, her health gradually declined. The Earl watched her with the most anxious care, but he could not persuade her to leave Highfield, when change of air and scene was recommended; for she loved it, for the sake of her former happiness; and here she died, after many months of patient suffering."

"That was indeed melancholy," said young Plowden, when Mr. Prior paused, and applied to the foaming jug by his side, "No wonder the Earl left the place."

"No, indeed, Ralph, he was heart-broken; and has literally been dying by inches ever since."

"But, did you not discover the cause of this dreadful business, Mr. Prior?"

"Never! there was not any clue to lead us to the fact; and, indeed, what desirable object was to be obtained by such a discovery? the misfortune was irremediable; and all felt it too deeply to care to open their lips upon so harrowing a subject. Thus, as soon as the last duties had been paid to the countess, Lord Trefoil set off for France, and never again set his foot on this part of his property."

"I am not surprised at that," returned the young farmer, "no doubt he hated the place, after having lost all he valued most in the world here."

"In truth, I believe so, Ralph, but, as I said before, my lady having an affection for the spot, he would not part with it." After a momentary pause, he continued, "Do you know, I really think, I shall not like to have Highfield re-occupied by strangers at first, though I am sure I shall endeavour to reconcile myself to them. The earl is in very bad health I understand, so we shall not see much of him, and that will be very strange to me."

"Well, Mr. Prior, I hope all will go on as well as since you have been almost master here, and then, I have no doubt, all his lordship's tenants will be satisfied. But I must be going homewards now," he added, rising as he

spoke, "and I thank you much for your tale."

"You are quite welcome, Ralph, but do not go without another glass of ale. Let us finish the jug. Here is to the health and happiness of Highfield, under its new master." The young friend of the bailiff made no objection to the toast, or the proffered refreshment, and, a few minutes' after, having pledged each other, they separated and returned home.

All was anxiety among the simple-minded villagers on the following day, for the arrival of the strangers, and numerous were the speculations on the probable advantages, or disadvantages, to be anticipated from the re-occupation of Highfield Tower. The young fancied the gaiety which would follow; the more advanced in life recalled, with satisfaction, the kindness of the late Earl and Countess; while the aged hoped they might not find any change for the worse from the expected arrival.

The curiosity of the whole village, however, was excited; and, towards six o'clock, almost the whole of its inhabitants had assembled at the park gates, for the purpose of welcoming the new lord. Every inequality of ground,—every gate was taken possession of, as a look-out point; and, for some time, every ear and

eye was on the stretch to catch the earliest sound, or the first glimpse of the approaching carriage. An hour passed, and signs of impatience began to appear, some even talked of going home, but were laughed out of it by their less hasty companions; and others, weary of the elevated positions they had taken up, descended, and threw themselves on the grass, while the children began to give vent to their long suppressed merriment, and to defy every attempt of their seniors for the preservation of silence and order. The evening, in short, was beginning to close, ere a light britska turned the corner of the road within sight, startling all by its sudden appearance without any notice; but which was easily accounted for by the continued and boisterous mirth of the younger portion of the party.

No time was lost by the peasants, upon the cry of "They are coming," in ranging themselves by the road side, notwithstanding the violent collision of several in the general haste; and they stood uncovered, to do honour to their lord. The carriage rapidly advanced; and when its speed was for a moment arrested, by passing the park gate, the men simultaneously gave a cheer of congratulation, the women curtsied, and the eyes of all were di-

rected towards an old gentleman, who, far from returning the salutation, shrank into the corner of the carriage, as if anxious to escape their notice; waving his hand impatiently at the same time, in token of disapproval.

This ungracious reception of their spontaneous civility, however, was partly compensated for, by the proceeding of a young man, occupying the rumble, who, without the least hesitation, removed his hat, and with a gay smile joined them in their hurrah.

As the humble party adjourned to the Trefoil Arms, and loitered for a few minutes around the favourite tree in its vicinity; many were the remarks hazarded upon the conduct and appearance of the newly arrived.

Some wondered who the youth was who had so opportunely seconded their expressions of pleasure, while others spoke in terms of disappointment of the bearing of the Earl; or regretted they had been induced to leave their homes at all, for so short-lived a gratification as that of seeing the earl enter his own domains; which gratification they thought ill compensated the trouble of watching three hours.

Ralph Plowden, however, was among the few who appeared willing to be satisfied; for he argued the reported illness of the Earl, as an

excuse for his apparent want of courtesy, at the same time that he declared he was sure Lord Stracy, whom he recognised, from Mr. Prior's description of the young man on the carriage, would soon be a great favourite in the village.

He could not, however, succeed in gaining over many of his companions, though he quitted them with a firm adherence to his own opinion, strengthened, as it was, by the information of his friend, the worthy bailiff.

CHAPTER II.

On his gay visage middle age
Had not yet pressed its signet sage,
Yet had not quench'd the open truth,
And fiery vehemence of youth;
Forward and frolic glee was there,
The will to do, the soul to dare,
The sparkling glance, soon blown to fire
Of hasty love, or headlong ire.

SCOTT.

"WHERE is Stracy, Horace?" said the Earl of Trefoil, on the following morning, as he took his seat at the breakfast-table, and held out his plate for a slice of the ham, over which the other was presiding. "Not up yet, eh?"

"Surely, my lord," returned the young man so addressed, and who appeared scarcely to have attained his fifth lustre, "you do not suspect his lordship of indulging in so idle a propensity on such a morning as this, when there is so large a scope for his exploring taste.

He was in my room an hour or two since, but, finding I was not inclined to join him in his ramble, he left the house alone."

"I think he might have waited until he could have accompanied me," continued the Earl, "but he is so thoughtless. Clara," he continued to a young lady about twenty, who was seated on his right, "you must lend me your arm in my walk this morning, as your brother has deserted his post."

"With the greatest pleasure, sir; but doubtless, Stracy will return soon, for he is well acquainted with your habits: perhaps he has been unexpectedly detained."

"Oh! my little Clara," rejoined her father, placing his hand affectionately upon hers, "I know you are never at a loss for an excuse for your friends; but Egerton is almost too bad sometimes."

"He is, indeed, my dear father; but you know his dereliction from your orders of strict regularity is more the effect of his ardent spirits, which carry him away, than from any intentional error."

"I hope and believe you are right, my dear; but still I am inclined to fear his exuberance will lead him beyond his depth in the whirlpool of excitement."

"Nay, nay," he continued with a smile, at the same time looking round the table, at which were seated, besides those already mentioned, his lady and younger children. The former his junior by thirty years; and the latter, a youth of about fifteen, and two little girls of tender age. "Nay, nay, I see I must not say anything against him, as there are so many about to take up his cause. One to six are fearful odds, so I must beat a retreat, and retire in good order before a superior force. Prudence is always the better part of courage."

"Here he comes, at last," exclaimed Algernon, as he observed his absent brother at a bound clear the invisible fence, which separated the lawn from the park; "here he comes at last, looking as hot as if he had been walking through the hot winds for a week. Why, Stracy," he pursued, as he approached the window, through which the stray one now entered, "where have you been all this time? we have almost done breakfast."

"That is unfortunate, for I have yet to commence mine, Algernon," said the other gaily; "however, I see you have not cleared the board."

Then, coming to the table, he saluted the Earl and Countess with an air of easy nonchalance, nodding familiarly to the others.

"You are late, sir," was all his father said, as Stracy drew a chair forward and took possession of it.

"Am I, indeed?" he responded, in a tone of assumed surprise, wherein a spice of affectation might be detected; whilst he took out his watch. "Half-past ten, by Jupiter! I had no idea I had so far exceeded my time. I beg you ten thousand pardons, my dear sir, for my breach of duty; but I was beguiled by a petticoat so far that I lost my way."

"A fair excuse, I suppose you think, my boy," returned the earl; "but, I assure you, I had rather you had offered me a less dangerous one. Have a care what you are about."

"Nay, sir, you take the matter too seriously. I spoke quite literally, for I never saw the face of the object of my pursuit. But this change of air has made me devilish hungry. I will trouble you for a wing of that chicken, Horace, and do let me have some tea, Clara, in the name of all that is merciful."

"Well! but Stracy," said Algernon, "do tell me where you have been?"

"Patience, boy," returned the brother, good humouredly, "do you not see our father is ready to go out, and I have not yet finished my breakfast?"

"Yes, but he has enlisted Clara in his service, so you may stay a little longer."

"There is no occasion to hurry, Egerton," said his father, who was gratified by his anxiety to repair the unintentional error of the morning. "I can give you half an hour to rest yourself, before I require your attendance."

With these words he left the room, where, notwithstanding the renewed solicitations of Algernon, Lord Stracy dispatched his meal, before he permitted a word to escape him relating to his early adventure.

Lady Trefoil and his sister, having then retired to prepare for their walk, he said gaily to the ladies Helen and Charlotte who were playing about the room, "Come, make yourselves scarce, little people, or you will not be ready to go out."

"Do you think we may go with you Stracy?" said the former, "papa did not say so."

"Oh! I will take you under my wing, as I am Prime Minister."

He then took Horace Tulk, who was his

brother's tutor, by the arm, and led him to the lawn; when, turning to Algernon, he said in a tone half angry, half playful, as he gave him a box on the right ear, which almost made the boy's eyes flash fire,

"I'll teach you, you young dog, to question me upon my proceedings, in presence of the Earl and Countess. I thought you knew better than that. When, pray, did you detect me at the confessional?"

For an instant the boy staggered with the blow, and Horace took up his cause.

"You are too severe, Stracy," he said, in a deprecating tone, "ungenerous. Algernon would not excite your father's anger intentionally."

"No, that I would not, Egerton; and I assure you that your gentle hint shall suffice for my future instruction on the subject; such hints are too forcible to require frequent repetition." He laughed as he spoke, and Stracy replied, as he laid his hand on his brother's shoulder, "You are a good fellow, Algernon, and, as this grave and reverend signior says, I believe I was over hasty, for after all, you did not do any mischief, as it happened; so I will tell you what I saw in my ramble."

The reconciliation being thus effected, and all the three seated on the grass, Lord Stracy continued, " You must know that when I left you, Horace, I struck right across the park towards the village; for you know it was too dark to see it as we came in last night, and I wanted to know whether there were any good houses about; so I strolled along the fields, on the other side of the high road, and at length came in sight of a long, low-roofed mansion; standing in what I suppose they designate " a park," and I was making my remarks upon this new object, when I saw something white fluttering between the trees, which flanked the house on the left. Now I don't know why, or wherefore, but something raised my curiosity to find out what was moving in this retired spot so early: doubtless, it was idleness, which they tell us is the root of all evil.

However, I followed a path across the field, leading directly to a little gate in the shrubbery; but, before I reached it, I discovered that a young lady was walking alone. The demon of curiosity and mischief possessed me, so, when I reached the gate, which I did very softly, you may be sure, finding she had passed, I crept along the hedge to

get sight of her, for I had already discovered she had the prettiest foot and ancle in the world; a perfect bijou of a foot. I am sure you would have admired it, fastidious though you be."

"Very possibly," answered his friend quietly," but pray let us hear how far your infinite prudence and discretion led you, in pursuit of your fair incognita."

"Spare your irony, Mr. Tulk, if you please;" replied the young lord, with affected displeasure, "my discretion must not be questioned."

"Because it cannot bear the ordeal, eh, Stracy? but go on."

"Well; but where was I? Oh! creeping under the hedge. She was walking with a book in her hand, which, together with her straw bonnet, completely concealed her face, which of course was beautiful; for unless I had placed myself directly before her, I had no chance of a peep; why she selected such an inconvenient head gear, I cannot imagine, unless she be unfit to be looked at."

"Why did you not scale the enclosure, and take her by storm, Egerton?" asked his brother, laughing heartily at his distress.

"Because I was too prudent," he replied, at the same time glancing at Horace: "I did indeed venture to leap the fence, when my patience was exhausted, but, by Jove, I was too much frightened to hold my vantage ground; for a most furious and terrific beast of a dog, which I had not observed before in her train, flew towards me with such a yell that I was fain to return whence I came, somewhat quicker, too, than I advanced.

"The dog, not being able to follow, remained yelping furiously, whilst I, like a culprit, stood immoveable behind a tree. It was vain I acted the statue, however, the animal continued to bark, in spite of the calls of his mistress; who was evidently alarmed, though she did not retreat immediately."

"I am convinced I did not betray myself, yet, I suppose she thought retreat the most prudent course to adopt, for, in a few minutes, I heard her receding footsteps, and all my hopes of seeing her lovely features vanished. Vexed at my disappointment, I hurled a stone at the yelping cur, which sent him howling after his lady, whom I watched into the house, and then set off home; but it cost me some trouble to retrace my way, and that is the reason I was so late. But I am determined to find out who

this young lady is, that I may scrape acquaint ance with her; in the solitude of the country, it will be an excellent pastime to fall in love: ah! I think I am touched already," laying his hand on his heart, and sighing deeply with affected distress.

"You are much to be pitied, truly," said Horace, laughing, "I know you are susceptible, Stracy, but I did not think a pretty foot could lead you into a breach of politeness, for such your invasion certainly was."

"Oh! but you are such a cool fellow," returned the other. Why, personal appearance, in your eyes, is valueless. You only look for that monster, called perfection?"

"Nay, you must not accuse me of coolness, for the description of your adventure convinces me you are far my superior in that qualification."

"Come, come, Horace, do not put on such a face of morality; I will be a good boy for the future," he said, with mock submission. "But here comes my father, so a truce to this nonsense."

They all rose quickly to meet his lordship, and his son continued, as he offered him the support of his youthful arm, "You have been munificent, my dear sir, in the allowance of

time for my breakfast; I must have been a Dalgetty, indeed, to have required so much; I hope you have not inconvenienced yourself?"

"The steward and bailiff detained me longer than I intended, but I told the latter to meet me at the south plantation an hour hence, after I have had my walk." So saying, with his lady on the other side, and attended by the rest of the party, the Earl proceeded to play the part of a guide in the meditated ramble.

CHAPTER III.

Going you say; and what intends the lad—
To seek his fortune? Fortune! Is he mad?
Has he the knowledge? Is he duly taught?
I think we know how fortune should be sought.
Perhaps he takes his chance to sink or swim.
Perhaps, he dreams of fortune seeking him.

CRABBE.

IT was many years since the Earl had visited Highfield, the spot of his nativity; for, at sixteen, the Honourable Algernon Stracy, the youngest of the two sons of his parents, had left England for the East, as an ensign. In the thirty succeeding years that he continued an exile, he successively trod the three next rounds in the ladder of promotion; he became the happy husband—the tender father—and the disconsolate widower of a lady, to whom he was most fondly attached, and who fully merited his affection; and when, by her death, he was left sole protector of his two infant

children, he resolved to accompany them home as soon as their age demanded the change; and his own affairs being arranged, his intention was put into execution about two years after.

He found his brother in the enjoyment of the family honours, their father having died suddenly within a few weeks of his son's return; and an unfortunate difference of opinion during the first year of their re-union completely estranged the brothers the rest of their lives. Colonel Stracy retired into the country, where he devoted himself entirely to the culture of a small estate he had purchased, and the care of his children, as far as the infirm state of his health permitted. But he deeply felt the want of a companion, and saw that his girl and boy required the eye of a mother to watch their steps in early life, with that care a father is unequal to; and it therefore created little surprise among his friends when he again entered the blessed state of matrimony, by uniting himself to the daughter of an old military friend; a young woman of domestic virtue, who had fulfilled the arduous duties of her situation in the most exemplary manner, as the harmony in which the two families had constantly resided could fully prove.

Colonel Stracy had not been married many

months, when the distressing death of his brother's only son paved the way for his own exaltation to the Peerage; and although, upon this occasion, he so far broke through the estrangement that subsisted between them, as to write to the Earl expressive of his sympathy, the Colonel, being an ambitious character, he felt secretly gratified at the prospect of his own boy eventually becoming the head of an ancient and noble house.

Where indeed, must we look for the parent, insensible to the elevation of his offspring, however careless he may be of his own!

His son, although most probably destined to adorn, or be adorned by, a title, besides being the only scion of the family, was early sent from home in the prosecution of his studies. Naturally of a delicate constitution, but fiery spirit, young Stracy had many and great difficulties to surmount, in his initiation in school discipline, as well as much to endure before he had established his character among his companions, who bitterly taunted him for his impotence to combat with others of his own age.

Perhaps, if Colonel Stracy had not lately become the father of another son, and found his time fully taken up by his second matrimonial duties, he might have been more anxious

in trusting his boy, a perfect exotic, from under his own eye; but, however it might have been under other circumstances, true it was he seemed to have forgotten his child was almost unequal to compete with a large school.

Fortunately for Egerton, on his first introduction to the young gentlemen, by the principal of the establishment, he was placed under the protection of one of the pupils, about two years his senior. This boy, who was no other than the Horace Tulk already mentioned, had been several years in the school, where he was a general favourite, at once became the champion of the stranger, and soon won his kindest regards.

The parents of each lived but a few miles apart, and thus the attachment suffered no pang of separation at the vacation, for many days never elapsed in the following few years, without their seeing each other. Mutual civilities were exchanged by the families of the Colonel and Mr. Tulk, in consequence, and Horace was often the guest of his friend for the week together.

Thus passed the time, until Egerton was twelve years of age, when Horace was suddenly removed from school under very painful circumstances, to explain which, we must give a brief sketch of his family.

His father had been a clerk in a lawyer's office, until his union with a young lady, possessing a good fortune, entirely at her own disposal. She was an orphan, and acted in direct opposition to the advice of her best friends, throughout the affair, for Mr. Tulk was a wild young man of five-and-twenty, in the receipt only of a few hundreds per annum, derived from his profession. He relinquished his business shortly after his marriage, removing into Devonshire, where he settled near Exeter. He was devoted to his wife, and no couple could be happier than they were; her friends became reconciled to the match, and for some years every thing around the Tulks wore the most promising appearance. His children, of whom Horace was the favourite and youngest, were well, though expensively, educated—his establishment was conducted in good style, and himself and his lady received into the best society in the neighbourhood.

It was a surprise to some, how he supported the expense attendant upon such a course, but of what consequence was it to their acquaintance in what manner their entertainments were furnished, provided they were benefitted? Still, it was not an unexpected event, when it began to be rumoured through the neighbour-

hood, that pecuniary considerations obliged Mr. Tulk to curtail his expenditure; or when, a few months after, financial embarrassments caused the disposal of all his property; the proceeds of which were found very inadequate to satisfy the demands of his creditors.

Then came the tardy, warning voice of those who had been the most constant in partaking his hospitality, with reproaches for his extravagance. They had long foreseen where all his gay doings would end—they had always heard he knew better how to spend his money than to earn it;—who could wonder at such a finale, when he had been vying with the great ones of the county? Did they not all know what he had with his wife, and that could not last for ever?—certainly, she had enjoyed it, for he appeared to have listened to all her wishes.

Of all these kind and friendly strictures, however, Mr. Tulk was unconscious, for he fled to France, when he found his insolvency must be discovered, leaving his wife to stand the brunt of the impending storm; and had not Colonel Stracy come to her assistance, she would have been ill able to weather it.

Through his means, everything was arranged as well as circumstances would allow, and herself and daughter sent to the Continent, to join

Mr. Tulk, whose lasting gratitude was commanded by his friend's generous kindness to himself and family. On Horace's account, the Colonel bade the father have no fears for the present, as he would educate him with his own son, to whom Horace had evinced so much attachment.

The two other young Tulks were each already provided for, in the army and navy; therefore, their father might deem himself fortunate, at the winding up of his affairs, to find that he had only to provide for so limited a portion of those who might naturally look to him for support.

Through the kindness of his wife's relations, he procured a maintenance abroad, but did not long enjoy a temporary respite from the consequence of his imprudence; as the shock operated so forcibly on Mrs. Tulk that she gradually declined, and in a few months was no more.

Affection for his lady, ill-judged affection, had been the principal occasion of Mr. Tulk's folly; for he could not deny her anything, therefore her death completely unmanned him; for weeks he lay on the bed of sickness, which he only left to become the inmate of a private mad-house, where he died a year or two after.

Colenel Stracy, finding Horace thus completely thrown on him for support, determined to act towards the boy in every respect as a parent, if, he merited such kindness; for which reason he had removed him from school, as soon as Egerton, and engaged a private tutor to prepare them both for college. He did not at first contemplate incurring so great an expense, but Horace evinced so much talent, and gained so considerably upon the kindness of his benefactor, that the General—for he had attained that rank—thought it but justice to give him every opportunity for improvement. Perhaps we might add also, as another reason for this proceeding, that his friend wished to be considered unsparing in his liberality.

Thus it was, however, that young Tulk's college expenses were defrayed; and, after taking honours, he returned to his patrons, and became the preceptor of Algernon, the General's only son by his second lady. In this situation, he continued to enjoy the smiles of prosperity, while his friend Egerton rambled over the Continent, whence he had returned but a short time before his family's adjournment to Highfield, whither he had accompanied them, "Because," he said, while he surveyed himself complacently in a large pier glass, "the air

of London in July was only fit for such unfortunate mortals as possessed neither liver, nor complexions to be injured by the extreme heat;" forgetting, as he spoke, that, in the class then under his contemptuous censure, he must include his father, whose eye, as it met that of his son, instantly recalled him to a sense of their impropriety.

Let it not, however, be inferred, from this sample, that Lord Stracy was a selfish, or heartless character. No; his faults arose from his extreme volatility, for he possessed as noble and warm a heart as could be conceived. Early indulgence had fostered many weeds, which ought to have been eradicated; and parental severity, exerted too late in life, only tended to aggravate the errors of an impetuous, thoughtless youth, whose heart was keenly alive to good and evil impress. Egerton's was a spirit on which coercion could effect only evil, while kindness was ever powerful in weaning him from his follies. More of his character we will not develop, as we judge it infinitely more amusing to unravel a mystery by degrees, than to be told the ungarnished truth.

Horace Tulk, on the contrary, was of a grave, silent disposition; studious by habit

and education, yet able to comprehend and participate in the gaiety of his friend, with whom he was deservedly a favourite. Not one, however, blind to his faults, for he frequently reproved him, and, by pointing out their commission, induced Lord Stracy to forego, remodel, or palliate his conduct; while in his pupil, Algernon, he had the pleasure of seeing a type of his own disposition, enlivened by the gaiety natural to a boy of fifteen.

We must now rejoin our pedestrian party, which reached the south plantation, where they were joined by Mr. Prior, according to the Earl's desire. Lady Trefoil, and Lady Clara, having announced their intention of returning to the house with the little girls, Horace proposed to accompany them; leaving the Earl, with his sons, to fathom the mysteries of the farming establishment.

For some time Lord Stracy paid little attention to his father's conversation, while he reclined on a bench, listening to Algernon's merry remarks; but when he heard Mr. Prior begin to detail the condition of the neighbourhood, and to give the names of the owners of the different estates in the vicinity, he drew near his father, and while he slowly paced to and fro, with his brother on his arm, he

greedily listened to the account; now and then smiling significantly at Algernon, as any thing particularly amused him.

"And pray, Prior," said the Earl, "does Lord Augustus Conway visit much here?"

"Oh! yes my lord; he is the life of the country, and goes everywhere; he is a great favourite round here, for he is happy to receive every one at his house, and never refuses to dine with any one."

"Lord Augustus to a T," said Stracy in a low tone to his brother. "Good feeding here, I suppose, or he would not be so condescending."

"I am glad to hear he is so popular," said the Earl; "I knew him when in Devonshire;" then, turning to his son, he continued, "we must pay his lordship a visit in a few days, Stracy."

"With a dinner invitation in your pocket, sir, I hope," returned he, laughing.

"I wish you would learn to be more discreet, Egerton," said the Earl with a frown; then, resuming his interrogatives, he said, "Have any of the estates here lately changed owners? Who has the Retreat?"

"Not within two or three years, my lord. The Retreat belongs to a widow lady, named Brown; and that old place beyond the vil-

lage, 'Brookside,' was bought five years ago by a Captain Beresford, my lord."

"Hah! ejaculated the Earl: Beresford; what, Beresford, of the Adamant?"

"I never heard what vessel he served in, my lord; but I believe the Captain has been much in the East. He has a deep scar down his face, my lord," added the servant, anxious to assist his master in proving the identity of the person he spoke of.

"The same, without a doubt," replied the Earl; "pray, has he a family?"

"One son only, my lord; but his sister's two daughters are with him. The eldest, Miss Murray, is considered very beautiful; but, as the young ladies seldom go out, except to church, or to visit the sick cottagers, very little is known of them. I have heard it said their uncle is extremely jealous of their leaving him, as they have no mother."

"By Jove, Algernon," said Stracy, "Miss Murray must be the 'Unknown.' I am determined," said he, in a low tone, "to ascertain it."

"Pray, is not the place you call Brookside," inquired he, addressing Mr. Prior, in his most affected tone, "that handsome place on the hill, about a mile from the park gate?"

"It is, my lord. Has your lordship seen it?"

"I just caught sight of it this morning, the timber in the park is fine."

"Not any thing like what we have here, my lord; though the plantations are kept in excellent order."

"The Captain is particular, then?"

"Very, my lord; but Miss Murray interests herself very much in the embellishment of the gardens, and is often out very early in the morning, with her favourite dog."

"Indeed!" answered the young nobleman, carelessly whistling as he drew his brother away to the bench again, leaving his father to finish the discussion he had interrupted, at his leisure. "I knew I could draw the badger, Algernon," he continued, with a laugh, as soon as they were out of ear-shot of the Earl, who was rather deaf; "I thought I could throw my father off the scent, by discoursing on the timber. Ha, ha, it is really quite delightful to find a nunnery here. Miss Murray, pretty, too! well I am satisfied with my morning's work. The devil is in it, or I will find means to subdue the Cerberus that attends her. I wonder where Horace is all this time?"

"With my mother and Clara, to be sure,

Egerton, I am sure he cannot have had time to go to the house, and back yet."

"You know nothing about it, let me tell you," replied the other, "I could have done the distance in half the time. I would lay my life, he has come across some worm-eaten volume, and is poring over it with Clara. I believe he has more love for rotten leather, and mouldy parchment, than any thing else in the world. Come, let us join the Earl, for I see he is dismissing his man of rents and acres."

"I am quite tired with the heat, boys;" said the Earl, rising at their approach, "and shall go home, but will not drag you with me, so go, both of you, down the park there, after Prior, he will show you the farms, if you like."

"What! and leave you alone, sir?" said Stracy.

"Oh! you will deem it a great hardship to follow me."

"By no means, dear sir," echoed both his sons, "we have plenty of time to explore the place."

"Well! I will not take both, so say which of you is ready," said his lordship, and, advancing a step or two,

"Go you, Stracy," whispered his brother, "but where shall we meet?"

"Down by the bridge," replied the other, quickly, "we then shall be on our way to the village."

"Come," said their father, who, not having caught their words, thought they could not agree, "Come, Algernon, I am sure I may claim your attendance. Let Stracy go his own way."

"I am at your service, sir," said his eldest son, starting to his side.

Lord Trefoil said, "No, no, Egerton, follow your own amusement, I will take Algernon with me."

"Oh! very well, my lord," replied Stracy, with assumed carelessness, as he made way for the favourite to take his father's arm. "It is as you please, certainly. I will be where you appointed, Algernon," he added, to his brother, who merely nodded assent, as he and his father walked away.

"It is fortunate I have a younger brother," murmured Stracy, ironically, as he watched his retreating parent an instant, before he struck into an opposite avenue. "So I am to amuse myself; that suggestion shall not be disregarded:" and away he went, singing, "I care for nobody, no, not I, if nobody cares for me."

CHAPTER IV.

A merrier man,
Within the limit of becoming mirth,
I never spent an hour's talk withal.
His eye begets occasion for his wit;
For every object that the one doth catch
The other turns to a mirth-moving jest.

SHAKSPEARE.

Lord Stracy had, unfortunately, imbibed an idea, engendered by his father's severity towards his follies, of a preference for his younger son. An idea perhaps not unfounded, for Algernon was a younger child, in the extreme acceptation of the term; and, had it not been for the invariable kindness, and judicious care, of the Countess, the harmony of the two families might not have been so strictly preserved.

Algernon had never been from home, and had wound himself round his father's heart by a blind submission to a will ever despotic;

while Stracy, feeling, after his return from continental scenes, his father still less willing to overlook his faults, attributed it to a growing partiality to his brother, and allowed jealousy to creep into his heart. Such, however, was the generosity of his nature that, unless some extraordinary expression of the Earl's feeling arrested his attention, he never dwelt upon the subject; preferring rather to drive away care by gaiety, than to increase his difficulties by fancy. Towards Algernon, also, he entertained, in common with the rest of the family, that affection which so highly gratified the excellent Countess; and which was a constant check upon any serious disagreement between the brothers.

In restored good humour, within five minutes after his transient vexation, he reached the now almost deserted dog-kennel, where he stopped to note the various canine accommodations, as he had several favourite animals which, for the present, were domiciliated in Devonshire, until there was time to learn the capability of their being received at Highfield. Here he found the principal gamekeeper; and a full hour had elapsed, in the discussion of one of his favourite topics, ere he recollected his promise to Algernon. When he did so,

however, he quickly took leave of Dickson; though not without an assurance of future return, and then hastened towards the appointed rendezvous. But Egerton was one of those who frequently are a long time before reaching the point for which they set out, and, in the present instance, ere he had accomplished half the distance, his attention was attracted by a beautiful white marble column, placed beneath the shadow of a large cedar of Lebanon. It was close to the bank of the lake, and stood upon a gentle slope, so embosomed in verdure that it was entirely concealed, until he was within a few paces.

"What use could such an object be," thought Egerton, "in so isolated, so secluded, a situation; and he almost unconsciously looked arouud to discover whether any bird's eye view of the mansion could be obtained, but no! it was completely shut in by trees, except on one side, where the lake expanded into a broad sheet of sparkling lustre. Again he looked at the unexpected object, and opening a little gate in the light ornamental fence, which enclosed the sacred spot, he stood upon the short velvet turf, whence the column rose by a few steps. Roses and woodbine twined around its base, or pedestal, and, on the side next the water,

appeared an inscription, which Lord Stracy immediately applied himself to decipher. It ran as follows:—

TO THE MEMORY
OF
REGINALD, LORD STRACY,
Who was accidentally drowned near this
spot, on the 16th of August 17—, this monument
is erected by his sorrowing parents.
In life he was justly beloved, and in death
sincerely lamented.

Sole Scion from the parent stem ;
To thee the lot was given
To bud alone, below on earth,
Before thy flight to heaven.

For those few short, though blissful, days,
Which God by thee conferred,
Thy [illegible] friends here join in praise,
And humbly thank the Lord.

In youth cut off by sudden death ;
And summoned to the skies,
May we not hope, in faith and love,
That thou with saints will rise ?

O yes, we'll trust, that when the trump—
The awful trump, shall sound ;
In company with spirits pure,
Thou wilt with Christ be found !

"So it was here," said Egerton, mentally, as he turned and gazed upon the lake, after an instant's pause ; wherein an indefinable sensation of mingled surprise and pity actuated

him, "that my poor cousin met with his sad end! —what a distracted theatre has not this little area formed! when my unfortunate aunt and uncle have bent in agony over the little tribute they themselves raised, in evidence of their pure, unsullied affection for a favourite son!"

Again he turned, and thoughtfully plucked a rose, which blossomed there "unseen," unable to account for the feeling which had dashed his high flow of spirits.

"Why, Stracy," exclaimed the cheerful voice of his brother, who ran hastily up to him, "what are you doing here? A pretty fellow you are to keep an appointment; there have I been kicking my heels down yonder a full hour, while you are——"

"Doing the sentimental, you would say, boy," answered Stracy, as his countenance resumed its wonted animation,—"and perhaps you are right. I quite forgot you, when I unexpectedly came upon this object. See here, Horace," he continued, to his friend, who followed Algernon at a more sober pace, "here is the very thing to please you—pretty idea, is it not?"

"An affectionate one, also," returned Tulk, after having read the inscription. "Poor boy! his vital thread was early snapped. Is your

father aware of the existence of this stone, Stracy?"

"I fancy not, for he has not pointed it out as a moral episode to the erroneous inheritor of that title, which would undoubtedly have been the case. Upon my word, I think it a very elegant affair, but wish it had been in a more advantageous situation."

"It appears to me most appropriately situated," answered Horace. "Neither fame, nor worldly feeling of any kind, prompted this memento of affection, and the flower, nipped in the bud, is as sincerely mourned by the silent tear, as by the loud wail of despair."

"Well! Horace, you and I never agree; so if you please, we will leave 'The Stracys' ladder of promotion' to its intended solitude."

"You will have some trouble in turning that monumental stone to that account, Egerton," said his brother, laughing.

"Not so difficult as you suppose, seeing I am half way up already, while you are still at the bottom, Gerny."

"Where, I hope, I shall always remain, Stracy, or I must make you my stepping-stone."

"Thank you for that, boy,—but look at our tutor's grave countenance, he disapproves our nonsense. Come, Horace, banish that frown,

you should let my words rebound from your tympanum, like a ball from off a wall."

"In general I do, Stracy, but I hate to hear you encouraging Algernon to be as apparently indiscreet as yourself."

"It is very wrong, to be sure," said the young lord, with feigned contrition, at the same time placing his arm within that of Tulk, "but you know, Tulk, what poor, weak mortals we are—and how our best endeavours have, sometimes, the most contrary effect; now, I intended to point out the instability of worldly greatness to your pupil, as exemplified by that column; but it seems you keep all Mentorian privileges to yourself; and, in the name of all the saints, I wish you joy of your office. By the way, I think you had always an inkling for reclaiming the erroneous, for when we were at school, if I recollect right, you once read the dominie a severe lecture on the cruelty of infantine flagellations, when you were under condemnation yourself, for giving one of your companions a black eye."

His friend listened to the moralizing commencement of this speech with surprise, but when he observed the lurking smile on Stracy's countenance as he proceeded, his own features gradually relaxed; and he said with a laugh,

"Egerton, you are incorrigible; but I suppose you will say I have provoked your satire now, as I did my punishment then—"

"The man that is truly wise, indeed,
Can gather honey from a weed,"

sang the merry Lord Stracy. "But let us wend our way to the village, Tulk. Remember, Algernon, you must not play any tricks to-day, since it is our first appearance among the natives, and favourable impressions are every thing; so no larking, if you please."

"No, no, Stracy," replied his brother; "I will leave all that sort of thing alone, until you think proper to 'shew me the way I should go.' With you for my guide, I know what I may expect."

"Beware of the hint I gave you this morning," answered the other.

Although he felt his brother was in jest, Algernon edged away, as if by instinct, and the party pursued the road to Highfield, where they passed a pleasant hour, in rambling over ground unknown to them.

Why, alas! should the ardour and zest of youth be extinguished by the calculations of age? Must we ever resign the delightful effervescence of existence, in proportion as we

journey on through the vale of years? Such, indeed, has been the natural change since the world began, and such it will be to the end of time; and we therefore must believe that 'whatever is, is right.'

END OF VOL. II.

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